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VALE.

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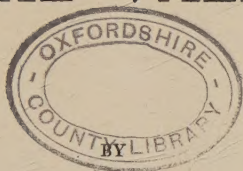




BLEDLOW RIDGE FROM GREEN HEALY.

(See Note F.)

THE CHILTERNS AND THE VALE



G. ELAND

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR BY
E. SANDERS

*"Aeternaque foedera certis
Imposuit natura locis."* VIRGIL, *Georgics*, i. 60.

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TO
SIR HUGH R. BEEVOR
WITH WHOM MANY HAPPY HOURS HAVE BEEN
PASSED IN CHILTERN BEECH-WOODS
THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED BY ITS WRITER

INTRODUCTION

To defend oneself from the charge of adding to the vast pile of books which nobody wants has ever been the aim of the writer. The plea of pressure from the author's friends has ceased to carry much weight for a long time; it barely survived the death of literary patronage. Nowadays it is more fashionable to begin by mentioning a dozen works in three European tongues, and then to say that none of them have developed fully some detail, which you may then discuss through the two bulky crown octavos which form your modest little monograph on, say, "The Social Habits of Coprophagous Beetles." Or if your theme be one of historical or literary character, it is better to unearth some document and trumpet the fact to the four corners of the globe as "important new evidence."

The humble topographer generally manages to be dull, even if he mercifully refrains from attempting the facetious; and yet his ought not to be a difficult task. He has a subject which he can compress until it just covers all his own hobby-horsical weaknesses, or expand until it is

as wide as human interest can render it ; some of it is bound to interest somebody. The hard line between legend and history fades before his pen, and it is bad luck indeed if he cannot meet a Great Person, of some age or other, every dozen miles or so. In our county of Buckinghamshire, for example, what a godsend to the topographer it is to be able to cite one of our greatest champions of freedom, two or three poets of the front rank, and one of our mightiest orators.

In point of fact the pious pilgrim to their shrines does not receive much encouragement. Hampden, were his shade to revisit the spot where his bones were so roughly handled two centuries after his death, would not recognise the house in which he lived ; the same might be said of Burke and Gregories,¹ of Gray and Stoke Court, of Waller and Hall Barn ; of Milton's Horton residence nothing is left, and of the "pretty box" at Chalfont so very much has been written—that nothing will be said of it in the following pages. Barring the sheep-like habit which leads us all to tread the same path of convention, without questioning why we do so, it is difficult to see the reason of the pious pilgrimage. If it be to a battlefield it is doubtful whether a full knowledge of the position of either army, and the strategic movement of the troops, enables us to visualise the scene which has made

¹ Of which not a trace remains.

the spot "historic"; what we actually see is evenly-drilled corn which catches and reflects the light as the ears bend to the breeze, and no further sign of the strife and slaughter which took place there than the "layered" hedge, which has indeed been slashed though by one who was "guiltless of his country's blood."

The case is not quite the same if the pilgrimage be to a building associated with a great man's name. We look for some trace of his personality which may be deductively perceived; or conversely we look for some influence upon him which may be inductively presumed from the environment in which he dwelt; there at any rate is the tie of human sympathy wrought by human handiwork, though the pilgrim will be left wishing with Teufelsdröckh that he might have that complement of Fortunatus' wishing-hat which should be *time*-annihilating, and could transport its wearer to any period, "shooting at will from the Fire-creation of the World to its Fire-consummation."

It is singular, by the by, that Peacock should make one of his characters, in discussing the relation between geographical and ethical elevation, declare that the "names of Hampden and Milton are associated with the level plains and flat pastures of Buckinghamshire."¹ On the contrary

¹ Mr. Forester in *Melincourt*, at the close of chapter xxxvii.

the Patriot's name is stamped upon the most hilly part of the county, and Milton only spent a few years as a young man on the Oxfordshire border, and a few more when he was old and blind among the hills.

Still, it would not be difficult to set forth the natives of Buckinghamshire as champions of freedom; for at the end of the century which made a beginning with Hampden the Quakers stood—and suffered—in considerable numbers, and a hundred years ago there seems to have been no stronger bond than alliteration between Aylesbury and Mr. Anyside Antijack,¹ for public meetings were held there of the following types: Anti-Slavery, Anti-Corn Law, Anti-Game Law, Anti-State Church, and Anti-sparrow Club. On the other hand it must be confessed that the county was rich in rotten boroughs: Amersham, Aylesbury, Buckingham, Marlow, Wendover, and Wycombe each returning two members to Parliament. “Wycombe,” said Cobbett, “is one of those famous things called boroughs, and 34 votes send Sir John Dashwood and Sir Thomas Baring to the ‘collective wisdom.’ The landlord where I put up ‘remembered’ the name of Dashwood, but had ‘forgotten’ who the ‘other’ was; there would be no forgetting of this sort if these thirty-four, together with *their* representatives, were called upon to pay their share

¹ Another character in *Melincourt*.

of the National Debt due from High Wycombe.”¹ It may surprise some of the eloquent people who bawl for universal suffrage to-day to learn that Lord Beaconsfield “always considered the great Reform Bill of 1832 as a disfranchising Bill,”² the reason being that the old franchise (in Aylesbury at all events) was that of “Potwallers,” or “Potwallopers”; a Potwalloper being a man “who boiled his own pot on his own hearth, but was not in receipt of parish relief; two families might occupy one house, but if it were divided in occupation, and each head of the family boiled his own pot, he was a voter.”³

The political history of Buckinghamshire in general and Aylesbury in particular is very interesting, but it will not figure in the following pages which carefully avoid the towns; their aim has been to mention or amplify details about some of the places or events more summarily dealt with by the guide-books. And here it should be emphatically stated that the writer's wish was not in any sense to write a guide-book, but to attempt the collection of notes which should convey some idea of the wealth of interest contained in the district; he is well aware that he may be accused of being “scrappy,” and the size of the book might easily have been doubled,

¹ *Rural Rides*, 1882, ed. 1908, vol. i. p. 111.

² J. K. Fowler's *Echoes of Old County Life*, p. 22.

³ *Ibid.*

but he has endeavoured to choose what is typical; if he has failed, any increase in the number of pages would have meant only greater boredom for the reader.

It was felt that anything like a regular description of the natural beauties had better not be attempted. Unless a writer has the descriptive ability of a Hardy or a Jefferies he will not raise a vivid picture, and even in the case of Hardy his superb landscapes are treated almost subjectively, and are bound up with the action and personality of his characters; while the splendour of Jefferies' word-pictures sometimes presents the shortcomings of the Pre-Raphaelites, for he saw more than the average man is capable of observing, and produced a result like that obtained by the camera, in that it exhibits more than the human eye and brain can simultaneously grasp. For the eye is selective, and sees a landscape, not as a succession of vignettes of varying focus, but as a whole in which certain parts dominate and the rest are subservient to them.

A few descriptions of actual walks have been left in, however, to dispel in some measure that smell of the lamp which may be found hanging over the pages. It is hoped that the able brush of Mr. Sanders will be found to be a better interpreter of the splendid scenery Mid-Buckinghamshire affords. A note at the end explains the position from which the sketches were made.

The scheme of the book is to devote the first two chapters to the Chilterns and the next two to the Vale; the fifth deals with the beech-woods; the sixth with two local industries; the seventh contains a history of the railways in the district; and the eighth has a brief account of the agricultural shows.

The chief sources of printed information for the Buckinghamshire topographer are Lipscomb and the publications of the Architectural and Archæological Society for the County of Buckingham, so frequently drawn upon in the following pages under the name of *Records of Bucks*.

In the fifty-seven years of their publication only nine complete volumes have accumulated, a pleasant contrast to the pitiless row beneath which some counties groan. Except for a period when articles of general rather than local interest were introduced they are full of sound information by good men.

At the risk of giving this little book an authoritative air to which it makes no pretence, the full reference is given in the foot-notes in order that any interested reader may be able to turn up the original without loss of time.

The expert, if chance should lay these pages before him, may smile at being told things with which he is familiar, or amuse himself by detecting blunders; but the appeal is made to the more tolerant general reader, in which class the writer

would wish himself to be included, with only one qualification in addition : a first-hand knowledge of the places mentioned, extending in some cases to many years, and a profound and ever-growing love for both Chilterns and Vale.



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THE CHILTERNS AND THE VALE

CHAPTER I

THE CHILTERNS

"Curiosities here are the Chiltern Hills, remarkable for being covered with stones, which yet promote the Fertility of the Ground."—*The British Monarchy*.¹

LIKE the subtle artist she is, Nature can employ nearly the same media over and over again in her landscapes without mere repetition; a characteristic, one might say an individuality, belongs to a district which is felt even though it defies analysis. Chalk and beeches may be found elsewhere, but the particular combination of them in Buckinghamshire happens also to be the best. Science talks fluently about cretaceous beds overlaid with fluviatile gravels, or fixes a magnifying eye upon the flora and fauna; the layman is stunned into respectful silence and thinks more loosely of the steep ridges where the flint-strewn earth thinly covers the chalk

¹ By G. Bickham, 1749. This work has no topographical value. It is a bibliographical curiosity, being entirely printed with copper-plates, and is only quoted for its ingenuous phrasing.

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which gleams through it ; of the narrow valleys, or "bottoms," where the soil is deeper and more worth cultivating ; and above all of the great beech-woods among which the wild cherry stands out brilliantly in spring with its dazzling blossom ; or of the whitebeam in the hedge-rows as the wind turns the conspicuous under-side of the leaves.

The one feature which some hold necessary to the ideal landscape, namely, water, is indeed lacking ; and where it does occur, as in the case of the Chess, it certainly heightens the effect, as all will agree who remember the familiar stretch of that trout-stream between Chesham and Chenies.

The word-mongers seem to derive the word "Chiltern" from "cealc," meaning chalk, but, with the pleasant diversity of opinion which always characterises them, one authority¹ at least prefers to find the source of the word in "ceald," meaning cold.

The "stones" referred to in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter are flints, of course ; although they may injure implements and otherwise add to the difficulty of tilling the land, their influence is on the whole beneficial, retaining the moisture as they do which would otherwise soon evaporate from a shallow soil in summer, and so preventing the ground from being

¹ Edmunds' *Traces of History in the Names of Places*, p. 188.

“baked.” If they are removed they are replaced by others working up, a process which the ploughman is not so sure about; he “knaus as they’re a-growin’ all the time.” A prolific writer¹ upon agriculture in the eighteenth century when dealing with our district does not seem to refer to flints growing, but had no doubts about “the great Stones that we call growing Stones, composed of vast Numbers of small Pebbles that lie in little Cells or Holes” (this seems to be that form of conglomerate generally called “Hertfordshire puddingstones”); these he mentions as having been used for parish boundaries instead of cutting marks on trees to their great damage, for the “growing or ever durable Stones” were set at the various points, “and possibly, nay likely, they may deserve those Names, though imperceptible to our Eyes or Memory.” Evidently our author was no sceptic. He has still less hesitation in speaking of the pebbles in the gravels, though “it is the opinion of some that they never grow after they are out of their native Bed in the Earth; and this they say is proved in Pavements that never encrease”; but then, as he properly says, London pavements are made of “Guernsey Pebbles” which “have in my slender opinion a greater opportunity of

Wm. Ellis: *Chiltern and Vale Farming Explained*, 1733, pp. 44 and 52. Some particulars respecting Ellis are given at the end of this book, Note A.

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a quick growth than most, from the porous Parts of their brown Skins, by which they seem to take in the Salts that the Sea leaves."

To the lover of the Chilterns the turning year means only the successive phases of chalk and beech. In the winter the woods appear all the darker against the light hue of the soil; on the bare chalk its remarkably sticky and slippery properties remind one of the "Farmer's Boy"—

"His heels deep-sinking every step he goes
Till dirt adhesive loads his clouted shoes."

As the year advances the beech buds thicken and give a purple tone to the woods, which yields to the most delicate green when the leaf is fully out, and the ground beneath is bright with the beautiful wood-sorrel; to be succeeded by the more sombre shade of summer, until the crowning glory is reached of autumn's crimson, russet and gold.

THE UPPER ICKNIELD WAY

It was the fashion of the old antiquaries to call the Icknield Way a Roman road. The learned Dr. Plot¹ has a good deal to say about "Basilical, Consular, or Prætorian ways, or Chemini maiores"; and he goes on to remark that the Icknield Way "was not raised, because it lies along under the

¹ *Natural History of Oxfordshire*, 1677, chap. x. p. 315.

Chiltern hills on a firm fast ground, having the Hills themselves for a sufficient direction." But this very fact of being neither paved nor raised, nor being straight, nor leading to Roman towns, is evidence that it was rather a British trackway. "It was anciently designed for the exchange of the corn and cattle of the East with the mineral riches of the West of England."¹ From Aston Hills it may be seen running north-east under Ivinghoe Beacon, and from that point down to Kimble another trackway, called the Lower Icknield Way, runs roughly parallel with it.²

The few places of importance which it touches made it "much used by stealers of cattle" in Dr. Plot's day.

That portion of it which lies between Wendover and Princes Risborough is rich in antiquities, and as Roman remains have been found at Little Kimble and other points along it, no doubt the Romans availed themselves of its existence, though they did not make a first-class road of it.

Opposite to Ellesborough towers Beacon Hill, a height of 786 feet, and just below that, in a group of trees, is the artificial eminence with its

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. i. p. 56, article by the Rev. W. J. Burgess. The word Icknield is to be derived from the East Anglian tribe of Icenii.

² It was probably this road which was described as "impassable in winter or very wet weather for carriages" at Ivinghoe (*Gentleman's Magazine*, 1812, pt. i. p. 210). See Note G at end.

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various outworks known as Cymbeline's Mount. The traditional ascription of it to Kunobelin or Cymbeline, who flourished about the beginning of the Christian era, seems to rest on no grounds that can be ascertained.

The earthwork seems to be a good example of the "mount and bailey" type of fortress which our Norman conquerors constructed. There was no masonry in these; the superstructure was always of wood, of which no trace can therefore remain.

In 1855 the Bucks Archæological Society excavated here, but found no more than "pieces of very coarse brown and black pottery, a boar's tusk, quantities of oyster shells, and some bones."¹ It is very difficult to give a date to fragments of pottery of this description. Mr. Allcroft, who has no hesitation in calling the work a "fairly perfect example of the mount and bailey type," calls these shards "of the thirteenth to fifteenth century";² but the writer in the *Victoria History* will have them of "pre-Roman character."³ The last-mentioned authority seems to make the whole work not only pre-Norman, but absolutely pre-historic,—as a kind of watching-post; going on to say that "the inclosures, or baileys, may perhaps have contained stockaded villages, or places for the shelter and protection of sheep, or indeed

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. i. p. 141.

² *Earthwork of England*, p. 411.

³ Vol. ii. p. 28.

for other purposes." It is difficult for the ordinary observer to see how they could possibly have subserved these functions, considering their small size, the larger of the two being no more than some thirty yards square. Mr. Allcroft finds traces of another and much larger fortress of this kind 500 yards westward, close beside the old line of the Icknield Way, and immediately behind the church of Little Kimble, and the adjoining farm; the mount at any rate is plainly discernible.

GREAT AND LITTLE KIMBLE

A fortnight ago the hawthorns were in full splendour; the spell of hot weather at the end of May and beginning of June has turned their snowy whiteness to brown husks, and some of the dog-roses have faded: the trees have reached their sober green of high summer, and there is no longer the zest of rivalry to keep the birds in full song; even the cuckoo is less persistent in his call. The beech-woods have become the "murmurous haunt of flies," where wood-sorrel has given place to the far less lovely wood-sanicle; in a word we have passed from spring to summer in this fortnight.

However the Kimbles are reached the way must be pleasant. From the south there is none better than from Saunderton to Lacey Green,

and by a long strip of Grims Dyke to Parslow's Hillock, and so through Hillock Wood (a good example of a very bad beech-wood, apparently sprung from old stools) to Green Healy or Green Hailey, where a few cottages stand 800 feet up. Just where the road drops sharply to Monks Risborough a turn through a belt of beech on the right leads one above Whiteleaf Cross, and so by the foot of Longdown Hill and beneath Pulpit Hill to Great Kimble.

Great Kimble Church is remarkable for several reasons: its splendid fluted Norman font, which bears traces of having been coloured; its traditional associations with Hampden's great act of scarcely Passive resistance (for which see any guide-book, seizing hungrily on the incident); and for the complete way in which "restoration" can destroy any feeling of antiquity.

The last-mentioned characteristic belongs to Little Kimble Church also; Fate, recording her agents on a conspicuous brass-plate by the pulpit, chose the seventies of last century for the task. Some things were spared, notably a remarkable fresco on the north wall of the nave, with some fainter ones opposite, and a group of tiles now in the middle of the chancel floor, which take one back to the verge of the middle ages at a glance; the figure of a knight apparently tilting is quite spirited, and two other figures "the likeness of a kingly crown have on."

In the north wall of the chancel is a low side window "which is remarkable as being in immediate juxtaposition with a Decorated window, itself being a small Early English window with deep internal splay."¹

The church is certainly worth visiting.

PULPIT HILL

The summit of Pulpit Hill is 813 feet above sea-level, and upon it is a very good example of a "contour fort," that is a work which depends largely on the natural steepness of the ground for its security; in this case a little scarping has made the northern side of the camp inaccessible. It is only on the east that the adjacent ground is on a level with the camp, and here a double vallum affords protection. Fragments of worked flints and "knock-offs" of a neolithic type may occasionally be found, but it scarcely needs this reminder of early occupation in order to picture it as a strongly-defended outlook post, commanding a view over a wide range of country; across Oxfordshire to the distant Berkshire hills, with the long line of Bledlow to the south, and in a northerly direction right across the southern part of the Vale to the hills on the Northamptonshire border.²

¹ Parker's *Ecclesiastical Topography of Buckinghamshire*, 1849, Church No. 192.

² See Allcroft's *Earthwork of England*, pp. 77, 78.

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The camp is covered with beeches; opposite, on Longdown Hill, are more beeches, and on any kind of day at any time of year the traveller is richly rewarded for the somewhat stiff climb needed to reach the fort. Lovely when he looks over ripening corn to where Ashendon and Waddesdon are slowly made out in the blue distance; glorious when the beeches are in their daintiest Maytime green, or their flaming colours in autumn; and not least grand when the white of the chalk, which comes so near the surface, is outdone by a covering of snow and the bare woods form a velvety dark patch upon it.

WHITELEAF CROSS

Immediately on the further side of Longdown is Whiteleaf Cross. Here Dryasdust may indulge the wildest flights of his fancy; he may see in it a memorial, cut through the scanty turf into the chalk, commemorating a victory of Saxons over Danes or of Danes over Saxons; he may see an early Christian symbol, or adaptation of some previous mark into such a symbol; he may even regard it as a "modification of a purely phallic form"!¹

This seems a tolerably wide range of theories to choose from, but they are all as nothing

¹ *Victoria History of Bucks*, vol. i. p. 189. "Phallic forms" and "Druidism" are responsible for many archæological heresies.

compared with the singular notion that it is no more than a mark by the Parliamentary troops to denote to those stationed in the Vale "the route, by way of Hampden and Missenden, to the headquarters of the Bucks Lieutenants at Amersham. Probably it formed part of Hampden's general scheme of defence for the Chiltern Hills, which protected London from the King's threatened advance."¹ In order to justify this amazing theory, the father of it assumes the correct spelling to be "White Cliff Cross,"² and lays stress on the fact that the early topographers did not mention it.

It is certainly interesting news to a civilian to learn that in time of war there is leisure to carry out a work of this kind—a work, too, which could have been done by any efficient scout, or for that matter by a mere finger-post; further, it is not in the right place to serve for a mark, as the pass in the hills is between Longdown and Pulpit Hills, and troops attempting to cross at Whiteleaf would soon find themselves in difficulties. The idea is either an example of misplaced learning (for it is carefully developed), or an elaborate example of humour.³

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. vii. pp. 559–567, article by E. J. Payne.

² Cary's map of 1805 spells it "Whiteliff Cross."

³ One might suggest that the cross was cut by Mr. Kensit in memory of Wyclif, who held the living of Ludgershall, ten miles or so to the west, for a short time. Or, retaining the modern spelling, let it preserve the name and fame of Wihthlafa, King of Mercia in the ninth century!

MONKS RISBOROUGH

Monks Risborough is well worth visiting for the sake of its church, which has a Norman font nearly equal to that at Great Kimble, a fourteenth century brass and some later ones, and a rood screen with painted panels; the restoration here is of the rare sort which does not spoil. Just behind the church stands a small stone dove-cot, with the remains of Decorated work about its doorway; it has been restored and cannot compare in size with the one further west at Notley Abbey, the birds nest in the interstices formed by the innermost layer of stones being placed alternately.

VELVET LAWN

Between Beacon Hill and Little Kimble Church is the valley which was very famous a century ago under the name of Velvet Lawn; a brook which comes down another valley nearer the church, called "Silver Spring," is crossed by a very picturesque stone bridge, the stream being held up by a small weir so as to furnish water enough to justify so elaborate a crossing. Velvet Lawn was a favourite spot for picnics, and there must have been great lament when (in June 1836) the "rural cottage was burnt down;

the chimney caught fire, the fire communicated with the thatch, and the house was soon down.”¹

The spot reminds one of the delightful discussion on landscape gardening in Peacock’s *Headlong Hall*. Mr. Milestone, the champion of the “clumping and levelling,” begs for a distinction between the picturesque and the beautiful; Mr. Gall, the reviewer, would discriminate them and add “in the laying out of grounds, a third and distinct character, which I call unexpectedness.” This lays him open to Mr. Milestone’s retort: “Pray, sir, by what name do you distinguish this character when a person walks round the grounds for the second time?”

Whether picturesque or beautiful, Velvet Lawn occasionally inspired visitors to attempt poetry. One could lament—

“I have not yet thy picture drawn,
Romantic, peaceful Velvet Lawn;
Your hills stupendous meet the skies,
And mock the weary climber’s sighs.”

But there were Cockneys in every day, and he goes on—

“How charming ’tis to watch and see
Each happy party at their tea.”²

¹ Gibb’s *Local Occurrences*, vol. iii. p. 286.

² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

BLEDLOW CROSS

About five miles south-west of Whiteleaf is a similar though much smaller cross cut on the side of the hill between Bledlow and Chinnor, right upon the Oxfordshire border. A hundred years ago it was so overgrown as to be unknown to the farmer on whose land it was; he "merely discovered it by accidentally walking over it."¹

This farmer was named Clarke, and was descended from the Holymans of Haddenham and Cuddington, of whom the most celebrated was John Holyman, a sixteenth century divine made Bishop of Bristol in 1554.²

Mr. Clarke aroused sufficient interest amongst the parishioners and the landowners (Eton College) to enable the cross to be scoured, and it has apparently been kept in good order since his day; he has another title to fame as one of the victims of the Poor Law disturbances in 1834, when he held the thankless office of overseer, and had his house shot at and his farming implements destroyed during the agitations of that unhappy period.³

At this end of the great Bledlow Ridge are also some tumuli.

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. ii. p. 313, note by Mr. Clarke, junr.

² *Gibb's Worthies of Buckinghamshire*, sub "Holyman."

³ *Gibb's Local Occurrences*, vol. iii. pp. 265-266.

NAPHILL COMMON

The frost of last night under which the roads sparkled in the moonlight yielded to a southern shift in the wind; by morning the ground has reverted to its former state of mud, and the air is so humid that though it does not actually rain, the moisture condenses on each bare twig, and hangs in a mist above the beeches crowning the ridges to the north of West Wycombe. Climbing these, the scene is typical of the best winter landscape. Ridge after beech-clad ridge stretches into the mist, projecting and crossing with bold curves, and fading in tone from the rich tawny brown of that nearest, where the carpet of dead leaves gives the colour, through duns to a grey indistinct outline in which definition is lost.

Occasionally a wood reaches down to the "bottom," but more often finishes abruptly about the 500 feet contour, and a zone of soil extends from its edge some way into the arable land through which the chalk gleams white; giving the impression that the land had been cleared as far up the hill as was justified by the depth of workable soil.

The ridge above West Wycombe confronts to the south that singular mausoleum erected by Lord le Despencer with funds bequeathed by Bubb Doddington, Lord Melcombe Regis, both

members of that sainted fraternity the Monks of Medmenham. Just below is a large pheasant-pen, token of an industry which we might suppose to be little older than our own days of big beats, if we had not good evidence for its existence in the seventeenth century, when Fuller tells us that "Aboundance of pheasants are kept about Wicombe, the care being more than the cost, seeing their generall repast is on Pismires. Whether these tame be as good as wild pheasants, I leave to Pallate-men to decide."¹

The ridge we were on finishes with Naphill Common,² where the great holly-bushes and junipers form a sombre green. How is it, by the way, that these shrubs have a native appearance in southern England, looking like part of the natural landscape in a manner the conifers never attain? Partly, no doubt, because, being artificially planted, these last are generally in straight rows, and are more calculated to gratify Sir Thomas Browne's thirst for the universal Quincunx than the traveller's love for natural beauty. But even a solitary spruce wears ever an exotic air, which the still denser yew never has. Is there some subtle sympathy by which we recognise what is indigenous, or

¹ Fuller's *Worthies*, 1662, p. 128.

² Is this derived from the British word "cnap" = a "protuberance, and thence a round isolated hill"? If so, it does not seem to be very appropriately named. The spelling "Napple" on Cary's map of 1805 gives the modern colloquial pronunciation.

is it merely the effect of knowing that to be the case? Certain it is that the sight of a laurel or rhododendron underplanted in a coppice of English hardwoods fills us with something akin to revulsion, as being utterly alien to the scene.

Naphill Common is one of those entrancing places on entering which the complexities which civilisation spells are forgotten, and imagination can easily conjure the pageant of the ages before our eyes, just as the same stage did duty for the varied scenes of the Elizabethan masterpieces. Among scattered and misshapen oaks and scrubby beech rise great bushes of juniper and gorse, eight or ten feet high; now all dark with the stalks of dead bracken forming a tangled mass of orange and ochreous lines across them. Wide tracks of short and springy turf wind across the Common, and in the highest part are several ponds, now brimful.

One can easily imagine our early British ancestor, somewhat undersized but wiry, scantily clad and indifferent to the vicissitudes of climate which torture our pampered bodies, darting behind one of the old gnarled thorns, with his primitive javelin, and a useful stone-headed bludgeon slung on him by a thong. Still more easily one can see the mediæval knight riding slowly down the broad turf-track, accoutred less heavily than fiction loves to paint him, but still strongly enough armed for any deed of chivalry Fate may

throw in his way. Again, one can see a body of the Parliamentary forces, some of Hampden's green-coats by chance, going northwards to join the garrisons at Missenden or Chesham, or westwards to Ellesborough.

Although our modern use of the juniper berry be of a somewhat particular kind, it was more generally appreciated in the seventeenth century, when Evelyn called it "one of the most universal remedies in the world to our crazy forester; the Theriacle or Electuary I have often made for my poor neighbours, and may well be term'd the Forester's Panacea against the Stone, Rheum, Pthysic, Dropsie, Jaundies, inward Imposthumes, nay Palsie, Gout, and Plague itself."¹

Descending the Common to Bradenham² we come to the close-shaven lawns amidst high walls of yew, down which used to walk that prince of bookworms, Isaac D'Israeli. At Bradenham he died a few years before his son first took office as Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Derby's first Administration.

SPEEN³

The hazel catkins are bearing that rufous pollen which means a fertile flower, dog's-

¹ *Silva*, ed. 1706, p. 159. See also Sir Thos. Browne's *Miscellany Tracts*, Nos. 1-38, for several curious ideas respecting juniper.

² That is the "village in the spacious hollow" (Edmunds' *Names of Places*), an excellent description.

³ See Note D at end.

mercury is up and the elder is putting forth leaves, the spikes of the arum leaves are erect, and the thrushes are fluting in that slow introspective kind of way which means that nesting has begun ; all these express, far more musically, the spiritual wrestling undergone by Thomas Ellwood when his halting muse, two hundred and fifty years ago, wrote upon "the winter tree":—

"The spring draws nigh,
As it, so I
Shall bud, I hope, and shoot."

Ellwood must often have ridden through Speen, and though it stands high above all main roads, we must presume that it was known to other people. As for Dryasdust, he is reminded of the Berkshire Speen, which he derives from the *Spinæ* on the way to *Aquæ Solis*. According to the Latin dictionary *Spinæ* may stand for anything, from a hawthorn bush to a toothpick, or, figuratively, for "difficulties, subtleties, perplexities"—the last seeming most appropriate.

Lipscomb will have nothing to say of Speen ; the maps ignore it until Cary's of 1805 ; and so does the map of Kelly's Directory of 1869. Most of the buildings which compose it are modern and repulsive, but an inn with a pleasing string-course above the ground-floor level bears the sign of "William the Fourth"

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and looks earlier. This simple device of the string-course gives it an individuality which the more pretentious stucco villas near by miss entirely.

And because Speen has been so neglected, it is mentioned here and now.

WIDMER

About two miles from Great Marlow, and just off the road to Oxford, is one of those remains of ecclesiastical buildings which has to appear under the heading of "Desecrated Churches." Widmer, now a farm, was once a chapel of the Templars; the crypt which still exists was their chapter-house: this is to be attributed to the early part of the thirteenth century.¹ A hundred years later Widmer passed to the Hospitallers, who are answerable for the Decorated windows on the south side. The curious appearance of this once consecrated building in a farmyard setting is heightened by a series of round stepping stones which form a sort of causeway from the cow-house to the chapel and dwelling-house.

COLDHARBOUR

Close to Widmer the name of Coldharbour figures on the map, while on the same sheet of

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. iii. p. 123, article by the Rev. W. Hastings Kelke.

the one-inch Ordnance Map the name occurs again nearer to Wycombe, and at the south-east corner of Chalfont Park; north of Aylesbury it is to be found between Swanbourne and Drayton Parslow, and on the older maps it used to be given between Aylesbury and Stone.¹ This is not intended to exhaust its occurrence in Buckinghamshire, and a complete list of English Coldharbours would be a lengthy one.

The fun begins when an attempt is made to explain the name; that Cold should mean Cold, and Harbour no more than a "lodging,"² is far too simple an explanation for a word-digger, though one there was who explained it as "the ruins of deserted Roman villas used by travellers who carried their own bedding and provisions."³

They would sooner make Cold a variant of coal, only there are unfortunately no coal deposits in Buckinghamshire to support this; so, after toying with the idea of its being a corruption of "coluber," a snake, because the name occurs at or near a turn in the road, the excellent and learned Admiral Smyth⁴ preferred to see its origin in Collis Arborum, the sacred grove of some forgotten god being thus indicated.

¹ The name still appears on a gate just before Hartwell Park wall begins as one goes from Aylesbury; it belongs to a grass farm, and one wonders why the maps now omit it.

² Compare Milton's *Comus*: "Huge forests, and unharbour'd heaths."

³ Isaac Taylor's *Words and Places*, 1878, p. 170.

⁴ *Records of Bucks*, vol. i. p. 105.

It is all highly edifying to the layman, who likes to look on it as one of that pleasant group of puzzles archæology offers us: fit to be classed with the use of the Low-side Window, or the Squint in architecture; or well calculated to serve as an alternative to the mental exercises set by Burton to cure melancholy: "Make Acrosticks upon friends' names; or write a comment upon Ælia Lælia Crispis, as many idle fellows have assayed."¹

GREAT HAMPDEN

"Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and the world shall forget you for kings."—*Hymn to Proserpine.*

Whether or no the slumber of the slain differs from that of him who dies in his bed—let eschatologists decide. Although the world has not forgotten The Patriot for a king, it has treated him curiously. In 1828 the pavement of the chancel in Great Hampden Church was being repaired, and Lord Nugent, then working at the *Memorials*, obtained leave to exhume Hampden's body, with a view to deciding whether the traditional account of his death in action was true, or whether Sir Robert Pye's story should not be preferred. This story made Hampden's death the result of the explosion of one of his own pistols, which had been overloaded and

¹ Part ii. Sect. ii. Memb. 4.

had blown off his right hand. The exhumation seems to have been badly stage-managed, but it was clear that the "right hand was severed from the arm, and for about six inches up the arm the flesh had wasted away."¹ Lord Nugent did not refer to this discovery in his book, owing either to his disappointment at the prosaic end of his hero, or because "the circumstances attending the disinterring were not altogether satisfactory, the memory of which it was not desirable to perpetuate."²

The features of the great leader were very clearly to be made out on their first exposure, and a servant from the House recognised them as being identical with those of a portrait which hung on the staircase. This portrait proved to be that of Hampden himself.³ If that evidence is reliable, it is of great importance as proof that it really was Hampden's body which was examined. (See Note B at the end of this book.)

Within a very short distance of the church

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. iii. p. 103, article on "The Cause of the Death of Hampden" by R. Gibbs.

² *Records of Bucks*, vol. vi. p. 150, note to an article on "The Lords of Great Hampden Manor" by J. Parker. For a piece of really gruesome realism nothing could beat the account of the exhumation given by Lipscomb; one reader at least is willing to confess himself degenerate enough to feel nausea from the mere reading of it. Lipscomb's account makes Lord Nugent deny the body to have been Hampden's. Unfortunately no medical man was present.

³ *Once a Week*, January 10, 1863, article by Mrs. Tindal Atkinson.

there once lay one whom the world has very completely forgotten for a king; there is in fact a considerable tumulus, which the Ordnance Map oddly calls "Dane's Camp." In 1855 this was opened, a hole about three yards square being dug in the centre of the mound to a depth of about twelve feet, or four feet below the outside level, without any discovery being made beyond a few pieces of tile.¹

This negative result may merely mean that the barrow had been rifled at an earlier date; the sceptics of the day said it was no more than the site of a windmill. Curiously enough, though a "barrow" was opened near Chetwode in 1896 on a spot known traditionally as "Windmill Hill," it yielded "scraps of pottery, tobacco-pipes of the old small-bowled form and . . . the mould smelt quite strongly of flour!"² In that case no more than the former existence of a windmill could be shown, but at Hampden the fact that other tumuli, despoiled at some early date, are quite near, makes us suppose that this can only have been a burial-mound.

It is urging a platitude, but one cannot help wondering at the care with which men of every age have sought to perpetuate the interment of

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. i. p. 138. The excavation was carried out by the Archaeological Society, a man and a boy being employed at a total cost of ten shillings, which included the filling up of the hole. A depression remains to this day to mark their industry.

² *Records of Bucks*, vol. vii. p. 463, article by A. H. Cocks.

their remains, and at the utter fatuity of their efforts. The erection of a pyramid has not secured them from violation, and why should a tomb in the Invalides? Coming down to people less exalted than emperors and kings, the failure is but the more marked, and the number of bodies really lying beneath a "Hic iacet" must be quite small, and after a few centuries it is mere "luck" (for want of a better word) if an inscription or other record is left; but sculptors and monumental masons need have no fear of their business disappearing whilst the "Vanity of Human Wishes" seeks some respite from "the iniquity of oblivion."

Near to Great Hampden there exists in excellent preservation that singular relic of the earliest times known as Grim's Dyke. Its great length seems to preclude the idea of its being merely a defensive work; Buckinghamshire alone has sixteen miles of it in a broken state, from Bradenham in the south to Ashridge in the north, and the best opinion seems to look upon it as a boundary mark.¹ The theory of defence has a modern champion, however, for Mr. Morley Davies declares that "this earthwork, having its rampart to the north-west and ditch to the south-east, must have been constructed by the dwellers in the plain as a defence against

¹ Allcroft's *Earthwork of England*, p. 499, but the whole of chap. xv. on "Dykes and Ditches" should be read.

the people of the Chiltern forests.”¹ The unlearned reader wonders why the “dweller in the plain” should construct this gigantic ditch at the height of 700 feet here, and nearly 800 feet close to St. Leonards; or how, when he had constructed it, he made it proof against his enemies over long miles of difficult country. The name offers the greatest scope to the ingenuity of the derivation merchants. They may conjure up “Grimald, a terrible ruler”; or go behind that to “Grima, a goblin,” and so make of Grim’s Dyke, Grime’s Graves in Norfolk, and Grims-pound on Dartmoor, no more than so many belongings of the Devil.

LITTLE HAMPDEN

If you approach Little Hampden from Hampden Bottom, the necessity of having to pass several repulsive houses puts one in a frame of mind in which anything else would afford pleasure; but as the hill is climbed by a winding lane and the church is seen in a clump of Scotch firs, with the long line of Hampdenleaf Wood on the ridge to the east, it soon appears that Little Hampden can very well stand on its own merits for sheer beauty of situation.

The outside view of the church deserves Lips-

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. ix. p. 116, article on “The Ancient Hundreds of Bucks.”

comb's phrase, "a very mean edifice;" though the timber and plaster porch on the north is a striking feature. But recent discoveries inside give the building a distinction apart from architectural features proper; a series of mural paintings has been uncovered in which St. Christopher is shown several times, the earliest representation of him being ascribed to the beginning of the thirteenth century;¹ there are further remains of a painting of the Day of Judgment, where St. Michael is weighing souls.

From the Church to the Common is a stretch of sward shadowed by walnut-trees, with a few scattered cottages on the left. The Common itself is a delight at any time, with broad tracks of ancient turf amongst great furze-bushes and bracken: a variety of the elm grows here with a cork-like bark, and sets one wondering what so curious a bark can profit the tree; or conversely why all elms do not exhibit this feature.

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. ix. p. 421, article upon them by C. E. Keyser.

CHAPTER II

THE CHILTERN (continued)

CHESHAM

"A remnant of that crew,
Who, as their foes maintain, their Sovereign slew."
CRABBE: *The Frank Courtship.*

To deal with the larger towns is outside the ambition of this little work, the more so as various local guides perform that office better, and Chesham is merely mentioned for the sake of its Mad Hatter, though as soon as he became properly mad he left Chesham. His name was Roger Crab, and he was born about 1620, and brought up as a hatter at Chesham. For some time he served in the Parliamentary army, but returned to Chesham and prospered exceedingly in the hat business. Religious mania then drove him to sell all that he had and give unto the poor. After doing this he moved to Ickenham, near Uxbridge, and became a very model for vegetarians, counting it "a Sin against his Body and Soul to eat any sort of Flesh, Fish, or living creature, or to drink any Wine, Ale, or Beer." This abstemious diet brought the cost of his food

down to three-farthings a week only. It consisted of "Roots and Herbes; as Cabbage, Turnips, Carrots, Dock-leaves, and grass; also Bread and Bran, without Butter or Cheese." A sackcloth frock and a coarse pair of breeches open at the knees were all his clothing.

The chief account of him is given in the title to a kind of autobiography he published in 1655,¹ from which the particulars quoted above are derived. The pamphlet itself is an extremely dull polemico-theological tract, to be read only with much labour, but some "verse" into which he drops makes us suppose that he at one time possessed a characteristic which we shall find ascribed to another hermit, when we come to Dinton:—

"If any would know who is the author,
Or ask whose lines are these,
I answer, one who drinketh water,
And now a liver at ease.
In drinking cannot be drunk,
Nor am I mov'd to swear,
And from wenching am I sunk,
My bones are kept so bare."

Evidently it was only the herbaceous fare which kept his "ass from kicking," as Walter Shandy would say, quoting Hierome's *Life of Hillarion*.

¹ *The English Hermit, or the Wonder of this Age, &c.*; reprinted in *Harleian Miscellany*, vol. vi. p. 390, though without the curious woodcut.

CHESHAM BOIS AND CHENIES

"Grave-stones tell truth scarce forty yeers: generations passe while some trees stand, and old Families last not three Oakes."

Sir T. BROWNE'S *Hydriotaphia*, chap. v.

Chesham Bois at present shows a dreadful picture of what men can do who wish to express themselves in bricks and mortar without possessing taste. Between this type and the speculative builder one fears that its amenities have gone beyond recall; but the interest which lies in its church is less easily spoiled.

Chesham Bois was one of the manors possessed by the great Cheyne family, whom we shall meet again at Drayton Beauchamp. The Cheynes were at Iselhampstead as early as the reign of Henry III., and to discriminate between two places on either side of the Chess valley named Iselhampstead, the one had "Latimer" and the other "Chenies" affixed to it, and now the generic name has dropped and the specific name alone remains.

Cockneys sometimes pronounce Chenies with a long ē,¹ but the ancient spelling of the Cheyne name almost staggers one. After accepting its derivation from the French *chêne*, an oak, or *chenai*, a grove of oaks, we must be ready to see it spelt de Chednoy, de Cheney, de Cheigny,

¹ The spelling "Cheyney" on Speed's map of 1666 gives the correct modern pronunciation.

and de Chyngnie; de Kausne, de Kan, de Ken, de Shaine, de Sheene, and de Cahaigues; Cheyney, Cheney, and Cheyne; but these variants omit de Keynes, de Chinene, de Chene, and the Latinised forms de Querceto, Caneto, and Casineto.¹

In the chancel of Chesham Bois Church are brasses to Elizabeth Cheyne (1516), "on whose soule Jhu have mercy, amen;" and to her husband, Robert, who survived her thirty-six years, he merely has the phrase, "whose soule we comende to God's infinite mercy;" thereby indicating the change of doctrine respecting prayer for the dead. "The memorial of Robert, which so pointedly avoids prayer for the dead, was doubtless executed under the direction of his son John, who became an active promoter of the Reformed religion."² It was this John who presented Hooker to the living of Drayton Beauchamp. The line of the Cheynes came to an end on the death of William, second Viscount Newhaven, in 1728.

But the church boasts of a brass still more remarkable, namely, one to Benedict Lee, on which the fact of his being a "chrysom" child is declared, not only by the crossed folds of linen on the shroud in which the child is wrapped, but also by the word "crysom"

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. i. p. 236, article by the Rev. W. H. Kelke.

² *Records of Bucks*, vol. ii. p. 130, article by the Rev. W. H. Kelke.

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actually appearing on the brass. The only regret is that no date occurs, and 1542 is only conjectural, though probable; and the precise amount of meaning to be attached to the term at that date provides a fertile source of speculation, as the early connotation of the word, applied to a child who had been anointed with the chrism (which amounted to being confirmed), was lost somewhat after the ceremony had been abandoned.¹

For instance, one wonders what precise amount of meaning Jeremy Taylor attached to it, when he said: "Every morning creeps out of a dark cloud, leaving behind it an ignorance and silence deep as midnight, and undiscerned as are the Phantasms that make a Chrisome Child to smile" (*Holy Dying*, chap. i. 2).

There remains by the side of the pulpit at Chesham Bois the old hour-glass stand; the very sight of it sends a shudder through us degenerates, spoiled by ten-minutes' sermons.

THE RIDGES ON THE NORTH-WEST OF CHESHAM

"Season of mists"—the first words of the great Ode sum up the day completely; wreaths

¹ *Records of Bucks.*, vol. vi. pp. 189-198; a learned paper by the Rev. C. H. Evelyn White, subsequently reprinted separately. The sexton of Chesham Bois remembers Mr. White, who is still happily with us though lost to the neighbourhood, with fond memories of his preaching: "It was pure Gospel as he gev us."

of mist filling the bottoms and hanging on the ridges,—clogging with wet the cobwebs which drape the hedges. Later, when the sun has climbed a little and exerted whatever post-equinoctial power he may have, the mists become thin and the foreground clears, but every outline in the middle distance is softened, and the horizon is far more narrow than usual. From Chesham the ridges spread out northwards and westwards like a fan. The first one divides Herbert Hole from Pednor Bottom. Up this goes a track which ends at Little Pednor Farm, where there is a good example of the homestead moat. North of this comes Chartridge, with few attractions; then Asheridge, Bellington, and Hawridge (the first syllable of which must be shortened—"Horridge").

To-day the curving sweeps at the intersection of these ridges blend with a still softer outline, wiping out the sharp succession of planes a brighter day would show.

The hedges are wildly untidy, and considerably thinned by the recent gale; the maples are lemon-coloured; the bracken, so vigorously tall and green a few weeks ago, is now brown and shrivelled; the thistles are a mass of grey pappus.

Of hedgerow flowers only scabious and a little hawkweed remain, but through the hedge comes the sweet smell of the mustard, on which the

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sheep will soon be folded. You may hear the "tang of their tankards" as they now wander over the stubble, at present having to work harder for their living. In another stubble field is a flock of turkeys, over fifty, with but two months life before them, if they but knew. The last martin went two days ago (October 14), and except for small coveys of partridges and a few tits there are not many birds of any kind about; the bold robin is the sole songster. The leaves of the oak have a "rusty" appearance, but not the colour of rust, merely an extreme darkness as yet; the ashes, by far the latest to put forth their leaves, are the first to lose them. The mightiest colour of all in these hills, the flaming beeches, as yet exhibit their orange in patches only, on the outermost boughs.

Hawridge lies but little over a mile to the south-east of Cholesbury. Just behind the church is a very small, circular camp, which must have been a strong position, however, and is thought by Allcroft to have been an outpost to the Cholesbury stronghold.

Some three miles further south-east, just beyond Ashley Green, is Grove Farm, "a fine example of a double moat, in which the outer works are not merely more extensive than the inner, but also wider and deeper."¹ There are the remains of a strong gateway, of massive flint-work, and

¹ Allcroft's *Earthwork of England*, p. 484.

beyond is a building which the Ordnance Map calls "chapel" (and the moat a "camp"), but it would seem more properly to be described as the refectory "of a Religious house with small buildings, probably dormitories, attached to it."¹ The manor once belonged to the Cheynes of Drayton Beauchamp.

Due west of Chesham, on the right of the Missenden road, is a desecrated chapel at Great Hundridge Farm; it stands by a beech-wood, with other woods in the bottom below, and commands a grand view of the ridges. The appearance of a Perpendicular three-light window among farm buildings is strange, and as the house beyond looks like early Jacobean work, the whole would form a very charming picture, if it were not effectually marred by a barn with a roof of galvanised iron which destroys the amenities of the place in a simple but thorough manner.

THE COUNTRY NORTH OF GREAT MISSENDEN

On the left of the road leading from Missenden to Chesham, close to a chalk-pit, is "a small house of Gothic character, which the stranger might conjecture to be ancient, or at least to be formed of old ecclesiastical remains."² Its history is far more prosaic, for it was built of

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. i. p. 125.

² *Records of Bucks*, vol. vi. p. 323, article by the Rev. C. H. E. White,

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clay "by a too adventurous plasterer" during last century upon Common land without leave being obtained of the lord of the manor; a small omission which resulted in the too adventurous one having to abandon his humble tenement of clay in the Superman's favour. Romance is struck dumb.

To the south of this road, a little further on, is a square earthwork in Rook Wood which is marked "camp" on the map, and known as "The Castle." It is one of those riddles of the past which the useful phrase "Roman camp" will not wholly answer, and Mr. Allcroft queries whether it might be no more than a homestead-moat.¹

In Bray's Wood and in Reddingwick Wood² are examples of more undoubted homestead moats. Bray's Wood was supposed in 1855³ to be an "ancient fortified village," though a building of far more recent date was admitted to have stood there; an old inhabitant remembering that forty years before that "cartloads of flint had been carried away for the roads in the neighbourhood." Since that date the fosse has been filled up considerably, and the shape of the entrenchment is not easily made out to-day.

¹ *Earthwork of England*, p. 315.

² The name does not appear on the one-inch map. It is the wood south of Ballinger Bottom. A footpath from South Heath towards Little Pednor Farm passes through it.

³ *Records of Bucks*, vol. i. p. 171, article by Boughey Burgess.

In the case of Reddingwick Wood, the inner moated area is still very well defined. The south-eastern corner generally has a fair amount of water in it throughout the year. It is surrounded by works apparently earlier, "a shallow fosse and a rampart of a type usually associated with British sites;"¹ so that possibly the builders of the moated houses in both cases took advantage of pre-existing works.

A cart-track which leads from Cholesbury in the direction of Bray's Wood has on the right, in the bottom below, a small copse in which are some most singular remains, very difficult to explain. At present there is a mound of slag, black ashes, and moulding sand—in fact, all the evidence of a foundry having existed there in early times. In the article upon Bray's Wood, already referred to, the mound is described as 112 yards in circumference, and about four feet in depth at the centre; and "loads upon loads of the fine wood ash" had then been carted away into the fields. The undergrowth makes it difficult to see now, but it appears to have diminished still more; enough remains to make one wonder whence the ore for smelting was obtained. That the founders should have been led to this spot by the abundance of charcoal (which was being manufactured near by fifty years ago) is easily understood; but whether they brought their ore

¹ Allcroft's *Earthwork of England*, p. 471.

from afar, or depended upon some pocket in the Lower Greensand,¹ "may admit of a wide conjecture." Nothing has been found to "date" the works in the least, and the assumption that they were Roman might pass if it were not that we have an instance of a foundry (of a different type) in quite recent times within a short distance, every trace of which has almost vanished. Before leaving the slag-heap it should be said that it is known as "Cindery Bottom," though men who had known it by that name all their lives were astonished when shown a piece of slag taken from the place; they attached no meaning to the name.

Two miles westwards of Cindery Bottom, at King's Ash, there stood, fifty or more years ago, an iron foundry owned by a man named Harold Davis, who subsequently removed it to Three Households, near Chalfont St. Giles, where it still is, though unused. His father had carried on a similar business at Hemel Hempstead, which flourishes to-day. The early prosperity of the family is said to be due to their having owned an eight-row drill, at a time when these implements were unknown in the district; it used to go round from farm to farm to do the sowing. The King's Ash Foundry was not a large concern, and used chiefly for the repair of such machinery as was then employed in agriculture, the making

¹ Occurring in patches south-west of Aylesbury.

of ploughshares and so on ; ornamental castings made there do, however, exist.

The site of this foundry is now an unbroken grass field with no external sign that it had ever been used for industrial purposes. An old man at Swan Bottom, and another at Potter Hill, remember it as boys, but when they pass away the very memory of its having ever existed will perish. It was apparently too small to obtain mention in the *Victoria County History* among the extinct foundries. This of course is a different kind of work from the smelting which took place at Cindery Bottom, for the King's Ash Foundry had for raw material pig-iron, which was brought on the Wendover branch of the Grand Junction Canal ; but it is an illustration of the rapidity with which a seat of human industry may be utterly wiped out, and makes one demand more direct evidence before accepting the prehistoric user of Cindery Bottom.

If the material said to have been carted away in great bulk were indeed "wood ash," that is a strong argument against any great antiquity for the smelting works ; for if it were wood ash the rains of ages must have dissolved them long ago, and if it were not wood ash it does not appear why it was worth while to cart it on to the land.

CHOLESBURY

“The massy mound
That runs around the hill ; the rampart once
Of iron war, in ancient barbarous times,
When disunited Britain ever bled,
Lost in eternal broil.”

THOMSON'S *Spring*.

With a persistency worthy of a better cause the Ordnance Map continues to print “Danish Camp” against the circular enclosure of about eleven acres at Cholesbury ; the simple rule which guided them being that when earthworks were square they should be called Roman, and when they were round they should be called Danish ; a system with all the defects of a sweeping generalisation. Lipscomb summed up by supposing it “to have been a British town, afterwards converted into a military work by the Danes ; but it seems more probably a Danish encampment” ;¹ and this may have had influence in deciding its description ; but as early as 1869 the striking resemblance it bore to a British oppidum, or fortified village, as described by Cæsar, was noticed,² and the best modern authority supports that view.³ From the top of the vallum to the bottom of the fosse the depth is thirty

¹ Vol. iii. p. 315.

² *Kelly's Directory* for that year.

³ *Allcroft's Earthwork of England*, pp. 48 and 135.

feet in places, and the width of the fosse is little less at the south-west angle, where a second line of entrenchment still further secures that point.

Inside the camp is a pond which never dries up, and the whole must have afforded a secure refuge.

The northern portion of the camp is now plough-land, and the southern grass, the fosse and vallum being covered with beech, so that any one standing within the enclosure obtains a very good idea of its extent. At the extreme south stand the church and rectory of the parish. A seventeenth century incumbent was a victim of the Act of Uniformity (1622), William Dyer, a man of great piety, which bore fruit in several books "in which he much emulated the style of John Bunyan"; and finally he inclined to Quakerism, and was buried among the disciples of Fox.¹

Another rector nearer our own day was the Rev. H. P. Jeston, who held the living for a long time and made himself much beloved by his flock. He figured in the extraordinary state of things brought about by the condition of the Poor Law in 1830. In order to see how things were at this time we will first look at some records of what was taking place near by :²—

¹ Gibb's *Worthies of Buckinghamshire*.

² From Gibb's *Local Occurrences*, vol. iii.

1826, *Oct.* 29.—A person was summoned at Hemel Hempstead to show cause why he did not pay his poor rate. His defence was that his rates came to 75 per cent. of his rent and taxes; that a neighbouring farmer employed six men, to whom he paid but 3s. per week each, the remainder being paid out of the rates.

1829, *Nov.* 11.—Thirty paupers from Haddenham attended at Aylesbury clamouring for their pay. The overseer told the magistrates that it would be a relief if they would put him in gaol till his time of office had expired, for he really was almost worried to death; he could not pay the poor as it was impossible to collect the rates.

1830, *June* 12.—A good farm of 270 acres at North Marston is on the owner's hands for want of a tenant, and £40 has been paid for rates on it in one quarter. At Oving last year the poor rates on 9 acres of pasture amounted to £13, 10s., which is its full value.

This gives us a slight idea of the position, and lessens the shock we feel when we turn to Cholesbury itself, and find that “in 1831, out of 98 who had a settlement in the parish (the total population being then 127), there were no less than 64 in receipt of relief, and the poor rates alone

exceeded 24s. in the pound. As the result the glebe, with all the land in the parish save some 16 acres, was thrown out of cultivation, and the parish had to exist for some time by means of rates in aid levied on other parishes in the Hundred. This state of affairs, together with a series of letters which Mr. Jeston sent to the *Times*, and his evidence before the Poor Law Commission, had a considerable share in bringing on the present Poor Law"¹—which to-day seems likely to need further revision. (See Note C at the end of this book.)

The social complications of Cholesbury were also the means of introducing the allotment system there in 1833, when the Agricultural Employment Association purchased 55 acres in the parish, and divided it into allotments of one to four acres. They have since reverted to private property, having fulfilled their function.

Between Cholesbury and St. Leonards a pleasant old inn stands on the high ground. The landlord is an orator in his way, and when the present writer first visited his house, and asked whether a distant clump of trees were not the Camp, the landlord replied that it was, and added: "I don't wish to mispersuade you, or go contrary-like, but if you goes to thisyer

¹ Obituary notice of Mr. Jeston in the *Bucks Herald* of July 1889. The *Kelly's Directory*, already quoted, gives the poor rate as 30s. in the pound in 1833.

Camp, what'll you see? You'll go in by the church, you'll peruse your way round, and out you'll come, while if you was to go to Arston 'Hills,¹ you'd see a limit of a distance of a view of above fourteen mile."

¹ Aston Hills, the western spur of the Chilterns, here overhanging Aston Clinton.



IVINGHOE FROM HALTON WOOD.
Looking North-east towards Ivinghoe Beacon.

CHAPTER III

THE VALE

It is an accepted canon of pictorial art that the greatest light and greatest shadow must come together somewhere in the picture; and however easily the geologist may reconcile the junction of the Jurassic and Cretaceous systems, it must strike the layman that a greater contrast could not be than exists between the great chalk sweeps which make up the Chilterns and the mighty beds of Oxford and Kimmeridge clays which are answerable for the superb pastures of the Vale. There, when a hill rises, you may be sure to find an Oolitic outcrop, or patches of the Portland beds.

Although a good deal of the pasture is extremely old, there is also a fair proportion which must have been under the plough before the repeal of the Corn Laws. From the amount of attention devoted to Vale farming by William Ellis,¹ at the beginning of the eighteenth century, it is clear that a large proportion of the area was then arable. The ridges in many pas-

¹ *Chiltern and Vale Farming Explained*, already quoted; and see Note A.

tures to-day confirm this, though their relative prominence is no guide to the length of time the land has been laid down to grass, being entirely dependent upon the character of the subsoil.

To a considerable extent, perhaps, the exaggerated height of some ridges may be the relics of the "open-field" system of cultivation, before the Enclosure Acts had extinguished that primitive form of tillage. "The height of the middle or crowns of the ridges, raised very often more than two feet above the level of the furrows between them, was the means of getting rid of the water, which individuals only possess by uptopping their ridges."¹ If one supposes that the land were laid down to grass, before it had been enclosed for a very long period, it is easy to see that there would have been no opportunity for these exaggerated ridges to be levelled down. The irregularity of line still occasionally observable in these ridges is due to the same cause of the "open-field" system. The constant factor in them will be found to be the *width*, which is five and a half yards, a "rod, pole or perch": this is measurement by the rod, or *virga*, whence the term "virgate" in Domesday.

There is one striking passage in Ellis's account (p. 3), in which he says that rents in the Chil-

¹ *General View of the Agriculture of Buckinghamshire*, by the Rev. St. John Priest, 1810, p. 131.

terns far exceed those of the Vale. It must be remembered that Ellis wrote from Little Gaddesden, close to some of the best Chiltern land, and that Cobbett, no mean judge, could describe¹ the land near to Hemel Hempstead as a "red tenacious flinty loam upon a bed of chalk a yard or two beneath, which, in my opinion, is the very best *corn land* that we have in England." Ellis's observations seem to be confined to his own neighbourhood, and one may doubt whether his dictum would ever have held good for land further south at Missenden, Amersham, and Princes Risborough; for in 1810² land at those three places fetched 12s., 16s., and 18s. respectively, whilst in the Vale it was let at from £1 to £3 per acre; at Waddesdon, 28s. to 36s.; at Quarrendon, 40s. to 53s., tithe-free; and at Chilton, Dorton, and Chearsley, 40s. to 50s.

In 1810 rents at Lee, near Wendover, were 20s. per acre, tithe-free. To-day 771 acres in this district have been taken, of which one-quarter is grass and three-quarters arable land. The rents range from 13s. 6d. to £1, and the average of the whole area is just under 16s.

In the Vale to-day 50s. to 60s. is not an unusual rent, and £3, 10s. per acre is being paid for 10 acres in one case.

¹ *Rural Rides*, ed. 1908, vol. i. p. 105.

² *General View of the Agriculture of Buckinghamshire*, by the Rev. St. John Priest, pp. 67-69,

Apart from the diminished profit, or no profit, to be obtained from corn-growing to-day, the possibilities of dairy-farming could not of course be realised before the introduction of modern carrying facilities. It is clear from the figures given above that the grazing value of the pastures has long been known.

One striking feature noticeable on passing from the Chilterns to the Vale is, that though thatch is rarely seen amongst the hills, it is quite the rule in the older class of cottages in the Vale. To-day, when there is more corn grown in the hills, this appears curious, but it is doubtless an indication of the time when "reeds" were the roofing most easily procured in the Vale, while Chiltern straw was either too scanty or too short to justify its economical use.

Every district has its own style of fencing, and the local peculiarities of gate-fastenings might prove a theme for a volume; there is nothing very distinctive about the gates in the Vale, but the gateway usually has some stone thrown down to withstand the passage of cattle through a narrow opening where the top soil is soft. There is a fair number of double hedges, in which there is quite a considerable amount of hedgerow timber. Seen from a height like Oving the country seems to be almost wooded, but however much an oak or an ash appeals to the eye, it is usually poor economy, as its

shade has done damage to whatever might grow beneath it in eighty years, equivalent to three times its value when felled. Fortunately for the landscape the protection such trees afford to stock has preserved a good deal.

The chief delight of the Vale perhaps is the assurance it gives that one has got away from the area subject to Cockney influence. The sophisticating influence of the jaded Londoner does not extend beyond the Chilterns; this is by no means meant to argue a simplicity in the Vale-dwellers, in an opprobrious sense, since they are extremely shrewd, but the whole tone of the district is different. The hub of their universe is Aylesbury, and their interests when not pastoral are sporting; you may see puppies at walk in every village. For exercise and beautiful scenery the Chilterns are second to no place, but for that refreshment caused by a totally different environment the Vale is to be preferred.

BERNWOOD FOREST

At the time Sir Thomas Browne was laying about him to destroy "Vulgar Errors" perhaps the true meaning of the word "forest" had not been forgotten, but since those days the fact that a forest contained woodland had become traditionally perverted into the notion that it must of necessity be covered entirely with trees, and the

many efforts of authors to dispel this illusion, by assuring their readers that a forest was no more than a definitely circumscribed tract of land (waste-land, pasture and woodland), dedicated to the preservation of the king's game and subject to a special code of laws, do not seem to have destroyed the error.

Even in these times, when nearly every one must have seen or heard of the forests of Exmoor and Dartmoor, with hardly a century-old tree upon them, the association of trees with the word "forest" seems still to be inevitable; and when the guide-book bids you see in the woods of Wotton the remains of the forest of Bernwood, it is committing a "*suppressio veri*," for as much might be said of the strip of waste, marshy land between Brill and Boarstall, with nothing larger than a bush upon it.

"Within the forest of Bernwood there were many great woods and thickets of undergrowth, far more doubtless than would be formed on such forests as Dartmoor, Exmoor, or High Peak, but there would certainly be a considerable share of open ground and heaths."¹

The metes or boundaries of the forest appear to have varied at different periods, but the following places were always within its limits: On the north Ludgershall, on the east Ashendon, on the south Long Crendon and Worminghall,

¹ *Victoria History of Bucks*, vol. ii. p. 133.

and on the west Oakley and Boarstall. At one time it extended much further north towards the Claydons, and it has been suggested that the stockaded enclosures at Hoggeston and Cublington, presently to be mentioned more particularly, were defences against the depredations of wild beasts and men inhabiting Bernwood Forest in the south, and Whaddon Chase in the north.

In 1266 a forest-court determined that John the son of Nigel had the right to windfalls in his bailiwick, or division, within the forest. "If the wind fells ten trees in one night and day, the king will have them all; but if the wind fells less, the aforesaid John the son of Nigel will have them all." At the same inquisition John was declared to be entitled to such thorns as cannot be perforated with an auger.¹

Ten years later the keeper of Bernwood was ordered to carry out a promise by the king (Edward I.) to Sir Francis de Bononia, LL.D.; by supplying him with "two young bucks and four young does, together with four live hares and six live rabbits."²

In 1623 a Commission was issued for disafforesting Bernwood; the name lingered upon the maps down to Cary's of 1824, but has since disappeared from them entirely.

¹ J. C. Cox, *Royal Forests of England*, p. 268, quoting Turner's *Forest Pleas*.

² *Ibid.*, p. 260.

ASHENDON

There are a dozen places around the Vale which can beat Ashendon in point of height, for it only just exceeds the 500 feet level, but there is none more delightful in itself from which so wide a view can be seen; the sight is carried in an instant across miles of pasture and the Thame valley to the distant line of the Chilterns with Whiteleaf Cross quite plainly visible.

Though there is nothing of the semi-sensuous glories of some churches about St. Mary's, Ashendon, the exterior has a pleasant simplicity which is saved from being plain by some beautiful Decorated windows in the south aisle. The interior, however, is a curious example of a serious disease; restoration fever is bad, but when it is recurrent also the case is serious.

In 1855 it was possible to write:¹ "The church appears to have "undergone what the good-natured keeper of the key of it called a 'restoration'; *i.e.* objects of superstition had been carefully destroyed, memorial brasses have been sacrilegiously sold, or made away with, the commonest and cheapest deal has been used to make sittings, the rood-screen has been removed, and whitewash has been plentifully applied to walls, roof, and woodwork. These 'improvements' were made about fifteen years ago."

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. i, p. 137, article by the Rev. F. G. Lee.



ASHENDON CHURCH.

In spite of this a modern guide¹ could rejoice that "the church has been untouched by the restorer, old pews remain which, however ugly, remind us of the eighteenth century." To-day this no longer remains true. The pews have entirely given way to seats which are anything but a delight to the eye, and the interior has been covered with a pale blue distemper which is scaling rapidly, though it has not been completed a year. On the other hand, the stone figure of a knight beneath a canopy on the north wall of the chancel has been cleansed of various layers of paint and whitewash which used to cover it, and the modern tide of blue distemper merely laps the couch on which he rests.

It is as well, perhaps, that the church is kept locked, as the traveller is thus discouraged from seeing the prosaic interior, which just about balances the charm of the outside. If he be wise he will pay his respects to the building from the churchyard and take the footpath to Over Winchendon, and thence by Eythrope to Aylesbury. In this way he may cover some ten miles of ground almost entirely over pastures; but however clearly the path may seem on the map, it is by no means easy to follow without a previous knowledge of the country, being in practice largely non-existent.

¹ Roscoe's *Little Guide to Buckinghamshire*, 1903, p. 63.

On his way he will have Waddesdon Manor on his left and about two miles away. This respectful distance is better preserved, for when its exotic splendour is seen at closer quarters the relation which should exist between the land and the house upon it is suggested by an inverse mental process; the châteaux at Waddesdon and Halton cannot be assimilated by the essentially English landscapes in which they stand.

BRILL

Local "rhymes" which recite place-names (such as the familiar one making Grendon Underwood to be "the dirtiest town that ever stood") have let off Brill without the usual disparaging epithet. Its neighbours do not come off so lightly :—

" Brill on the hill,
Oakley in the hole,
Shabby little Ickford,
And dirty Worminghall."

Nature has certainly been very kind to Brill. It cannot be said to owe much to man nowadays. Dryasdust will tell you of Roman potteries there, speak of Henry II. and John as frequent visitors, and try to raise other ghosts from the dim recesses of the chronicles. We may content ourselves with its Civil War history. At the close of 1642 the king established a garrison there, and the *Latest Intelligence* of February 2, 164 $\frac{2}{3}$,

could describe Brill as "a Towne fortified by nature, standing upon a hill, and made much stronger by art, having out-workes, halfe-moones and Redouts, the like not to be found in any Towne in England." This did not discourage Colonel Goodwin, with Hampden's regiment (the Patriot does not seem to have been there himself), from attacking it, though without effect. Within five months the garrison was removed, and from the somewhat desolate appearance it presents to-day has never been occupied by civil or military since. There is no ostentatious air of spruceness about the place, somewhat refreshing in days when material prosperity is made a fetish.

Brill is a lump of the Lower Greensand, with patches of Purbeck strata at the foot, and iron-stone occurs in small quantities. These materials mingled in the side of a cottage give a delightful series of tones. Occasionally pieces of the iron-stone may be seen in the "pointing" between the stones. As Gilbert White said on a similar occasion, it "has occasioned strangers to ask us pleasantly whether we fastened our walls together with tenpenny nails."¹

MUSWELL HILL

There is no better way of entering or leaving Brill than by the windmill, as the road to Mus-

¹ Letter IV. to Pennant.



well Hill takes you. When you cross the road to Boarstall and Oakley you are over a hundred feet lower than you were at Brill, but when you gain the top of Muswell Hill you are nearly fifty feet higher than you were at Brill; you are on the Lower Greensand with the Portland beds at the foot of the hill, and westwards you look over the immense plain of Oxfordshire from which the clay composing it is named.

The position is a strong one, and its strategic importance evidently appealed to man at some period or other, for he raised on the summit a remarkable earthwork, about eighty yards square, which the Ordnance Map unblushingly calls "Roman Camp." The archæologist of to-day cannot dismiss the matter so lightly. He notices,¹ from the negative point of view, the absence of Roman remains,² and the fact that the angles are not rounded, while the size of the station is too small for a permanent camp, and the rampart is too massive for a temporary one. Add to this that the perfectly flat top of the vallum is unbroken to-day, and the difficulty of dating it is still further increased; nor is it clear whence the substance of the vallum was derived, for

¹ Allcroft's *Earthwork of England*, pp. 314-315.

² In Knight's *History of the Dorton Chalybeate*, 1835, it is said (p. 58) that "heaps of human bones and several steel arrow-heads" were found on Muswell Hill; but it is not certain that he refers to the camp itself, and the expression "steel arrow-heads" is too vague to help us much; one would like to know where they are now.

there is not the usual fosse outside from which it might have been obtained. The arable field to the south has many flint flakes on the surface, of the type usually associated with neolithic man, and no flint occurs naturally within miles, so that the early occupation of the site is implied. Surely the Duke of Buckingham did not refer to this camp when he spoke¹ of "the curious works thrown up IN THE CIVIL WAR, near Muswell Hill, in front of these windows"—he was speaking at Wotton?

DORTON

"A place where they tell you that water alone
Can cure all distempers that ever were known."

New Bath Guide, Letter IV.

Just about the period which is made to live for us so vividly in the pages of *St. Ronan's Well*, a most spirited effort was made to institute a Buckinghamshire rival to Bath or Tunbridge Wells. The existence of the spring and its qualities (indicated by the stain of iron left upon the turf) had long been known to those who lived near, but they had only used it "in cutaneous diseases, and for washing mangey dogs in the water."² A slightly different account is given in the official guide, from which it appears

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. iii., meeting of the Society, 1867.

² *Lipscomb*, vol. i. p. 246. He adds that "modern improvements in the roads and the *march of intellect* concurred to invite an influx of visitors." The italics are his.

that the dogs treated were those used for "the diabolical practice of Bull-baiting," and that for several successive Sundays they were "not only immersed in its stream, for its tannin effects" (whatever that may mean), "but large quantities were also forced down them, to secure its invigorating power."¹

The classic taste with which the pump-room was designed seemed promising, but for some reason no very great facilities were afforded people who wished to stop and endure the "treatment." Probably they relied too much on its being "within a morning's drive of the metropolis." This was not made good, however, until the railway to Aylesbury was opened in 1839. From Aylesbury to Dorton is a good ten miles, and he must have been an early riser who could write: "The author has often left Brill in the morning, and breakfasted at half-past nine at his residence in St. James Square."²

A parliamentary witness over half a century later declared that "there were no houses or hotels where people could reside, and that was the reason the pump-room fell into ruins."

What accommodation "Morris's Dorton Spa Rural Hotel" had to offer was, no doubt, eagerly taken advantage of, for there "genuine wines"

¹ *History of the Dorton Chalybeate*, by T. Knight, Surgeon, ed. 1835, p. 14, note.

² *The Dorton Spas*, by W. Willcocks Sleight, M.D., 1842, p. 4.

might be obtained, according to the advertisement in Knight's *Guide*; and the "Sun Hotel" at Brill had the further attraction of "a gig to let." Mr. Hewiett combined the scarcely cognate callings of "grocer, ironmonger, and druggist," and he was duly "grateful for the liberal support he has received since his commencement in 1833"; while, in order that the children of visitors might not be neglected, Mr. Geo. Simmons educated young gentlemen at Grove House Academy, charging the modest sum of twenty guineas per annum for board and education in the case of boys under twelve, and but four guineas more if they were over fourteen; but "instruction in the Latin or Greek language" was another guinea a quarter, and "washing and mending" were a further two guineas a year.

The charge for "a warm chalybeate bath" was 3s. 6d., but 5s. if a separate dressing-room was demanded; while "for drinking the waters and promenade in the Pump Room and grounds" the cost to one person for the season was one guinea; a family not exceeding four in number might compound for two and a half guineas; and finally, whoever subscribed for six of any of the various baths "will be entitled to seven."

Whether it was the memory of the mangy dogs, the lack of accommodation, or the difficulty of access, the "Spa" languished, and a "promenade musicale" held in 1835 failed to

save the situation, so a year later a grand fête was held there "for the benefit of the Bucks Infirmary."¹ Even this advertising dodge did not protect Dorton for long from the Fate which attends places unblessed by Beau Nash.

To-day the spring is protected by a small circular building erected only a year or two ago; the water keeps at about the level of five feet in it, and is covered with a scum of iron-salts; the taste is like that of most chalybeate waters, and by no means very disagreeable. The old pump-room was entirely destroyed, and its circular shape can only be traced by the foundations which cover a good deal of ground, for it must have been a structure of good size.

About the same time as the Spa was struggling for existence Dorton made another attempt to draw wealth from the earth by working the coal-measures said to exist beneath the clay. A geological map of Buckinghamshire² of 1824 has a note to the effect that the "Oaktree clay" (which we now call Oxford clay) had been bored in several places near Dorton, "and a pit sunk." Although the last statement seems to be an exaggeration, there is no doubt that borings were made, much nearer to Brill than Dorton, though, in the big field to the south of Clinkwell Wood known as the Warren. The oldest inhabitants of

¹ Gibb's *Local Occurrences*, vol. iii. p. 279.

² Cary's map, coloured by "W. Smith, Mineral Surveyor."

Brill have vague recollections of having heard it discussed, and one labourer declared that there is still a great hole in the bottom of the valley, covered by a stone, and that anything thrown in took a long time to reach the bottom. The present writer confesses that he could not find this after careful search of the spot pointed out, but that he did find two wells or pits, one covered with boards, and the other with two flagstones, and that the latter certainly contained water at no great depth; as Dorton obtains its water supply from the Warren, and as there is a small building in the valley containing a ram which pumps water up to Brill House, the holes may be wells only, or converted to that use after having been made originally as coal-borings.

Looking down the beautiful valley,¹ brilliant on a hot day in May with buttercups and lady's-smock and with the hawthorns which make a broken line down the bottom a dazzling mass of white, while a large hare and a few pheasants come out of Clinkwell Wood, and the cuckoo calls continuously, one may be devoutly thankful that Dorton is not a fashionable watering-place, and still more that its development as a coal-mine, which would have littered those green slopes with the foul untidiness of the pithead, was never carried further.

¹ The pasture of the Warren is most excellent, and is said to be rented at £2 an acre.

The places we have been considering all lie within the Hundred of Ashendon, and that area exhibits two sad lacunæ in the maps of to-day when we compare them with Cary's map of 1824; vanished are the glories with which Fancy (with prosaic restraint) may invest "Hogtub Hall"; "a pleasant place, 'tis said, in times of yore."

There is no pandering to that pretentious principle in nomenclature which gives a place a name to live up to; the average sensual man, "the fattest hog in Epicurus' sty," might have dwelt there without a qualm: he might be a four—nay, a six-bottle man; and still do nought unbefitting the owner of Hogtub Hall.

Another horrid gap is caused by the disappearance of Buttermilk Hall,¹ some miles to the south of Hogtub;² inhabited by some kindred spirit, let us hope, "Arcades ambo;" or let us picture the two places as twin demesnes of one superman; let us conceive him raised to the peerage under the style and title of Baron Pigwash—but why raise this pleasing but idle picture? Wasting no more time upon an idle "Utinam!" let us rather gather comfort from still finding extant, near to the site of Buttermilk Hall, the more modest-sounding Catsbrain Farm.

¹ This name occurs in Lipscomb's map of Ashendon Hundred.

² Cary's map of 1805 does not exhibit Hogtub Hall, but it shows Smallbeer Hall close to Grandborough—a name still appearing in his map of 1824.

QUARRENDON

“They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshýd gloried and drank deep.”

It is very easy to believe the old chronicles which relate “the dismal and disastrous effects of a great flood here about 1570, when 3000 sheep and other cattle belonging to Sir Henry Lee were drowned; and the chapel, which was afterwards rebuilt by Sir Henry Lee, was also destroyed by a similar occurrence.”¹ A worse site it would be hard to imagine; but a few feet above the level of the Thame, a stream with a narrow and shallow channel which it is ready to leave on the least provocation. The first time the present writer attempted to reach Quarrendon the river was nearly a hundred yards wide, and the approach consequently impassable; the next time was at the beginning of April, and the day happened to be one of steady drizzle, the ground in the field (where the entrenchments thrown up in the engagement of 1642² still exist in excellent preservation) made a “sobbing” noise as the foot was moved on. Sir Henry Lee was evidently determined that the floods should lift up their heads against him in vain for the future, for he constructed an enormous wall of earth, inside the moat which surrounded his mansion, over twenty

¹ Lipscomb, vol. ii. p. 400.

² See under Hardwick, also Allcroft, p. 604.

feet wide at the summit. The splendour in which he lived and the fact that he entertained Queen Elizabeth here did not secure a long existence for the house, as it was pulled down in the early part of the eighteenth century; but the fate which overtook the beautiful chapel [dating from the thirteenth century, and restored very well by Sir Henry Lee] attached to it, seems even more unkind. We can reconcile ourselves to the destruction of a church which no living person has seen, or we can acquiesce in its adaptation to secular uses (as we saw at Widmer, Great Hundridge, and Ashley Green), but to see an example of fine architecture deliberately destroyed is a humiliating experience. Archdeacon Bickersteth, in a lecture delivered in 1858, said: "A marriage was solemnised here as late as 1746, and burials have taken place occasionally till within the last fifty years in the churchyard adjoining, the boundaries of which have now disappeared."¹ The vicar of Bierton used occasionally to come and conduct a service when convenient to him; but this must have been given up during the first half of the nineteenth century, when the church was broken into "by wanton persons who by degrees mutilated and carried off the monuments and the fittings of the interior." In a very short time after the work of destruction had begun this once beautiful structure became a mere quarry

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. ii. p. 27.

and timber-yard for anybody who needed a gatepost or railings: "When the farmyards, cowhouses, or gateways required stoning, part of a wall was pecked down and carted away, and occasionally the roads also were mended with its ruins."¹ The foundations of a shed and the coping of a farm-house wall near by give obvious evidence of their origin.

Not the least act of iconoclasm was that of a turner in Aylesbury who was accustomed, when he received an order for marble candlesticks, to "go to Quarrendon chapel and break off an arm or leg from the alabaster figures of the Lee monuments, and then turn them with his lathe into candlesticks. I once saw a leg broken off in this manner with the garter in rich blue enamel and the legend in gold letters still visible."² The feeling of repulsion excited by candlesticks of that date and type, always to be found in "lodgings," will be still further increased by remembrance of that dastardly outrage by the "wild ass" of Aylesbury.

The living, now annexed to Bierton, used to be held by a non-resident pluralist, who would be more interested in the decay than in the preservation of the church, which required his occasional attendance in person or by deputy.

The curious thing is that many people were quite aware of what was occurring. A note in

¹ Fowler's *Recollections of Old Country Life*, p. 204.

² Fowler, *loc. cit.*

1855 says: "The past year has made sad ravages with this ruined church. In that time the south porch has been levelled with the ground, and much of the south wall of the nave has fallen. Two years ago a door and a little pointing with Roman cement might have rescued the church from further ruin and desecration; even now it may be enclosed, and much of the building preserved."¹

To-day three arches, some buttresses, and the north wall alone remain; they are enclosed within an iron railing. Long-tailed sheep climb the rampart which was intended to protect Sir Henry Lee's work, and look curiously at the stray visitor to this piteous mark of man's greed.

In 1848 a pamphlet, without title-page or other external evidence to identify it, was published with a view to arouse interest in Quarrendon. It contains a lithograph of the chapel as it was in 1846. Except that the belfry and roof are missing, it appears to be complete externally, though the interior had been gutted by that date. The pamphlet contains another lithograph of the "proposed restoration," and perhaps it is as well that the scheme fell through. "It is impossible, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture."² This does not

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. i. p. 149.

² Ruskin's *Seven Lamps*, Aphorism 31,



FROM QUAINTON HILL. PITCHCOTT IN THE MIDDLE DISTANCE.

afford any excuse, however, for wanton destruction based on the most sordid and mercenary grounds.

QUAINTON

"Time, which antiquates antiquities," on the whole has dealt not unkindly with Quainton, sparing it a feature once common to every village, now scarce in this part of England—the village cross, which was to the small community pretty much what the steps of the Royal Exchange are to the City of London: "Proclamations were read there, public and parochial business was transacted, and many private engagements effected."¹ The shaft of Quainton cross is of sandstone and octagonal in shape; it has lost its head and arms, but is over four feet from the pedestal steps, which have been "restored" with unsympathetic bricks.

There is enough of the cross left to make it a fairly striking object as one stands at the foot of the green, and the derelict windmill behind it is another reminder of a more leisured past. In 1821 this windmill was threatened by an inhabitant named Foster, whose appetite enabled him to consume six pounds of bacon, a peck of potatoes, and a quartern loaf, accompanied

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. iii. p. 153, article by the Rev. W. H. Kelke on "Ancient Stone Crosses."

by a gallon of ale, in three hours. "He would undertake to swallow Quainton windmill if they would give him time."¹ The curiously galleried structure could withstand attacks of this medley of Gargantua and Don Quixote.

The almshouses, close to the church, have a delightful row of gables; they were built by Richard, son of the more famous Sir Ralph Winwood, who flourished in the days of "Eliza and our James"; they form a more dignified memorial to him than the life-size monument in the church, which a restoration mercifully relegated to the outer darkness of the tower. Among the benefits which used to accrue to the inmates of the almshouses was a load of beech-wood from the Chilterns annually. In 1817 an allowance of coal had been substituted for this, as wood had become scarcer and dear, and coal "considerably reduced in price by the completion of the Grand Junction Canal," which, says the historian,² "may be deemed a salutary and economical improvement in the regulations of the charity."

The church furnishes an instance of the badness of some old work, which is really very refreshing, for the *laudator temporis acti* will persist in thinking that all old work was good, forgetting that if bad it perished, and that

¹ Gibb's *Local Occurrences*, vol. iii. p. 89.

² *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1817, pt. ii. p. 418.

good work of to-day has as good a chance of lasting as ever.

The original structure of the thirteenth century was rebuilt, as regards the chancel, partly in the fourteenth and the remainder in the sixteenth century. The foundations of the tower "being very bad, had doubtless given rise to various rebuildings from time to time."¹ The nave roof of the eighteenth century, although of oak, "was of poor material, and of construction insufficient to carry properly the lead covering, or still less to afford any support to the failing walls." The holy-water stoup in the corner of the south porch was uncovered by the work done in 1877, having been hidden before by plaster.

Besides the Wingrave monument there is another elaborate one to Mr. Justice Dormer, who died in 1726. Before the restoration this stood across the north chancel aisle arch, projecting five feet into the chancel, with a huge iron railing in front. The Dormers figured largely in the history of Buckinghamshire; we shall meet them again at Wing.

In the chancel are several early brasses. In the obscurity of the sedilia one may be seen dated 1360; and two are erected to fifteenth century rectors.

One may regret the storm of 10th November

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. v. p. 25. Architect's report on the restoration of 1877.

70 THE CHILTERNS AND THE VALE

1810, which destroyed a mighty elm that used to stand near the Lych-gate; it had a girth of fifty-three feet, and the "ancient and invariable custom, when a corpse was brought for interment, was to rest it for a few minutes beneath the branches before it was carried into the church."¹

Until 1781 rushes and sedge were used for strewing on the floor of the church.

Quainton has a further particular interest as being the birthplace of Lipscomb, the county historian, who sacrificed his medical practice to his love for antiquities, and was duly rewarded by dying "in abject poverty and distress."²

The amount of labour and research he devoted to the subject, and the ample scale on which it was conceived, made it costly. "The purchase of the cheapest edition of the work on its publication involved an outlay of over £16, and this high price curtailed its sale."³ Curiously enough this just about represents the current market price of the work.

HARTWELL

The guide-books are very fond of saying a great deal about the residence of a dull French king at Hartwell, and far less about the enter-

¹ Lipscomb, vol. i. p. 436. The measurements of the tree were: Girth, 33 feet: height to principal branches, 20 feet.

² Gibb's *Worthies* p. 257.

³ *Ibid.*

taining crank who was owner of the estate for forty years from 1827. There is a biographical notice of him which fills twenty closely printed pages¹ of the dullest details conceivable. If any living soul has read it, he will learn, not only what Dr. John Lee did, but what he had intended to do, but could not. There was hardly anything in which he did not dabble, and like every one who spreads his energies over so wide an area, he was prevented for that reason from excelling in any one thing. He is perhaps best remembered for having borne the expense of several ponderous works, largely on astronomical subjects, which were written by Admiral Smyth, who could be a delightful writer when he chose. All scholars are indebted to him for a *Sailors' Word Book*. Dr. Lee's Eastern travels had made him a collector and "virtuoso"; besides having a strong leaning towards Egyptology, he was numismatist, astronomer, meteorologist, and geologist. These were scientific outlets for his energies; but he developed all kinds of social fads,—became Total Abstinence, Vegetarian, Anti-vaccinator, Anti-church-rate man, and "after passing for some years as a Tory country gentleman, he suddenly turned his coat, and became a venomous Radical."²

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. iii. pp. 215–236.

² Fowler's *Records of Old Times*, p. 74. The very lively account of Dr. Lee in these pages is probably fairly credible, and certainly very readable.

There must have been stranger scenes at Hartwell, when the autumnal concourse of cranks forgathered there, than ever occurred in Louis XVIII.'s time. "The teetotallers were noted trenchermen, and made up by eating what they denied themselves of drinking; Vegetarians throve here mightily, as they drank alcoholic beverages, and the anti-tobacconists could both eat meat and solace themselves with something stronger than water."

Besides the supporters of these various "amiable weaknesses," there used to be a "great demonstration of the Universal Peace Society, with the champion advocate Elihu Burritt."

Apart from this mighty stud of hobby-horses, Dr. Lee was a most excellent and much-respected man, and one of the most active promoters of the County Infirmary.

Of his pursuits a fondness for geology was certainly most to be expected from the possessor of a scientific mind living on the Portland beds, with the Purbeck strata close at hand, the Lower Greensand on one side of him, and the Kimmeridge clay on the other. The park wall of Hartwell and many a neighbouring cottage will be seen to have ammonites of various sizes built into them, though this is also practised to a smaller extent at many places far to the north and south of Hartwell, where they happen to be found.

It is curious, perhaps, that Dr. Lee, who had a taste for archæology and the means of gratifying it, was not more active in saving Quarrendon Church from destruction, the more so as he claimed some collateral descent from the Lees of Quarrendon.¹ In 1848 he did subscribe £5 "towards the expenses of investigating as to who are bound to rebuild the chapel,"² which is wholly characteristic.

In Dr. Lee's day the Hartwell Gooseberry Show was in all its glory. The sole object of the growers was to obtain size and weight. In 1841, for instance, the four winning gooseberries weighed 98 dwts. 4 grs., two years later they weighed 97 dwts. 3 grs., and in 1844 only a paltry 87 dwts. 18 grs. In 1851, however, they rose again to 95 dwts. The utility of these bloated pseudocarps does not appear, for it is confessed that they were very coarse in flavour by an old inhabitant of Hartwell, who well remembers sitting up all night to attend to the trees when the show drew near. In a dry summer a circular pan of water was constructed to surround the stem of the bush. The water, evaporating in the sun, "made it so as you could fairly see 'em grow." Only four to six were grown on one bush in a season. Fowler, who has a good deal to say

¹ So far as he was concerned the name was assumed, his original name being Fiott.

² Pamphlet on Quarrendon referred to under that heading.

about this competition,¹ makes it appear to have almost a political significance.

STONE

Stone Church was "restored" in 1844 in a very thorough manner. The vicar at the time (the Rev. J. B. Reade) tells how he modestly asked the builder what had happened to the "fine old sedilia, moulded canopies, &c.," and was answered, "O sir, the architect has ordered them to be brayed into sand."² This vigorous work revealed two interesting facts, however, the first of which was that the church was built on one of the natural sandhills common in the parish, and not on an artificial mound, as Lipscomb says.

The second discovery was that of a "palimpsest brass," bearing the name of Thomas Gorney and his wife, 1520, on one side, and on the other Christopher Tharpe with a date conjectured as 1514; the explanation being that it was never used for Tharpe, although prepared, and that when the engraver was ordered to prepare one for Gorney (the name of Gurney is still common in Buckinghamshire), he merely reversed the unused Tharpe brass.

¹ *Records of Old Times*, p. 76. The weights given in the text are from Gibb's *Local Occurrences*, vol. iv.

² *Records of Bucks*, vol. ii. p. 328, in a communication from Admiral Smyth.

DINTON

You may shake off To-day like an uncomfortable garment when you go to Dinton. Everything speaks to you of a Past more or less remote: the stocks on the green, now protected by a kind of pent-house; the churchyard cross, of which a stump remains; above all, the church with its magnificent Norman doorway and boldly sculptured tympanum; in the south aisle are several excellent fifteenth and sixteenth century brasses. The many-gabled manor-house next to the church has a lozenge pattern worked in the tiles of the roof. As the home of Simon Mayne, a regicide, and the place where Cromwell left a sword, still existing, on his return from Naseby, the house is a joy to the guide-books, so nothing need be said here.

Dinton's greatest distinction, perhaps, was its possession of a Hermit at the close of the seventeenth century. A print of this worthy, whose name was John Bigg, was published in 1787, with an inscription apparently derived from the Browne Willis MSS. As a portrait it is entirely imaginary. Romance whispered that Bigg, who was born in 1629, was the executioner of Charles I. A milder tradition makes him to have been Mayne's clerk. He lived in a kind of cave at Dinton, and was chiefly remarkable for the ingenuity with which he patched his clothes, which "he put off all at

once, they being all fastened together, and so in like manner put them on." He certainly did not avoid the Court of the Restoration from moral scruples, for "he was by relation very lewd, if he could entice women into his cave." In the summer he had the excellent good taste to "dwell some time in Kimbell woods."

He was buried in 1696 and his secret with him, for an excavation of his cave gave no clue as to the reason of his retreat. He has achieved the immortality of some of our greatest statesmen and warriors, for an inn at Ford is named "The Dinton Hermit."

FORD is a hamlet of the parish of Dinton, and remarkable for containing some meadows in which the member of the Liliaceæ known as the Fritillary, Snake's-head, or Chequered Daffodil grows freely. At Ford they would not recognise it under those names; it is Frogcup (pronounced Fro'cup) with them, and early in May it is gathered with great and mistaken zeal, for it fades after being picked nearly as quickly as the wood anemone. The beautifully spotted purple petals make it a delight when growing on the bright green of the young grass with lady's-smocks flowering beside it, and the whole setting of the fields which look eastwards towards the Chilterns, with Whiteleaf Cross standing out clearly six miles off, is a typical piece of English pastoral scenery.

EYTHROPE

So the maps spell it to-day; of old they preferred to make the suffix "drop" or "dorp," a variant which may still be seen on the Ordnance Map on the other side of Hartwell, in "Sedrup." You may hear Eythrope called "A-thop" and "I-thrup" by the natives; and Archdeacon Bourke needed the name to illustrate the occurrence of "thorpe" as a place-name ending in Buckinghamshire.

The interest of the place for us lies wholly in a past which may commence with its fifteenth century ownership by the Dynhams. Sir Roger Dynham here founded a chapel in 1490, in which his body was to rest ultimately, but until the chapel should be completed he was to be buried at Waddesdon. Early in the eighteenth century Eythrope was owned by Sir William Stanhope, one of the holy "monks" of Medmenham. "Browne Willis tells us how Sir Wm. Stanhope had built up the chapel, and caused divine service to be celebrated in it regularly for ten years, yet at length in 1738 most wickedly and sacrilegiously demolished it and made use of the stones to build a bridge over the Thame."¹

This Sir William Stanhope was second son of the third Earl of Chesterfield and brother of the

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. vii. p. 259, paper by the Rev. R. H. Pigott,

famous letter-writer who could boast that nobody had ever heard him laugh, as plebeian people do. The sixth Earl, it is suggested, pulled down Eythrope out of mere pique at not being appointed Lord Lieutenant of the county. Fowler tells the story,¹ which should perhaps be treated with reserve, as having been told him by a resident near Eythrope at the time, who vouched for its truth. There was a large house-party at Eythrope at the time (1810), and one of the guests greeted his host as he returned from shooting with the news that Lord Cobham had been promised the Lord-Lieutenancy. Lord Chesterfield made an excuse to break up the party the next day, and "never set foot again in the county"; and soon afterwards gave orders that the house should be demolished. About 1814 some alterations were effected at the "White Hart," Aylesbury (on the site of which stands the present Corn Exchange). "The new inn was built from the stone and timbers from Eythrope, and the portico was from the stables there."² A clock was purchased by Sir Scrope Morland and presented to the church of Little Kimble.³

The estate was sold to the Marquis d'Harcourt, and by him to Miss Alice de Rothschild, who built a Pavilion on the site of the old mansion.

¹ *Echoes of Old County Life*, p. 140.

² Fowler's *Records of Old Times*, p. 112.

³ Lipscomb, vol. ii. p. 344.

During the course of the work it was noticed that on one particular spot in the grounds the grass remained brown and dried, when all around it was green. "The earth was removed, and within six inches of the surface they discovered, in a broken-in lead coffin, the remains of Sir Roger Dynham. With the coffin was a monumental stone with brass plates and the effigy of a knight in armour."¹ Miss de Rothschild piously restored Sir Roger's bones to Waddesdon, where they had first been placed for centuries before. Let us hope that his rest was undisturbed by the little hiatus in which occurred Reformations and Revolutions, and while the chantry of his founding was rudely shattered by the iconoclastic hand of the boon companion of Lord Le Despencer, Doddington, Wilkes, and the other noble and distinguished "Franciscans."

The "brick and mortar" game which the idle of all times delight to play had a good deal of fascination for this "boon companion" (Sir William Stanhope), since he delighted to construct "the imitation of ruins of an amphitheatre, castles and turreted buildings on the neighbouring eminences," says Lipscomb,² and then falls a-moralising: "but the taste of the proprietor would have been better displayed if the scenery

¹ The Rev. R. H. Pigott, *loc. cit.*, who was told the story by the Rector of Waddesdon.

² Vol. i., p. 483,

had been cheered and enlivened with picturesque and commodious cottages, which might have remained permanent comforts to the poor, and lasting monuments, not only of refinement, but of public spirit and benevolence."

Let us rejoice, on knees bent in gratitude, that Time has not spared much of these spurious ruins ; a crenellated façade, which was never the front of anything, at Over Winchendon is a reminder of the barbarous taste of the day. Between Stone and Dinton is another example of the sham antique in the shape of an elaborate ruined tower, the work of Sir John Vanhattem : by accident or design it was raised upon the site of "the burial ground of an Anglo-Saxon chief and his dependents,"¹ and several valuable "finds" were subsequently made there.

OVER WINCHENDON

The bitter east wind is the drag on the wheel of the rolling year. In sheltered corners of copses lesser celandine and primroses are flowering, the hawthorn buds are on the point of bursting ; and there is a thickening among the oak boughs which would prove reddish tips of twigs, if the grey veil which to-day serves for sky would part, and let the sun bring out latent colour.

Approaching Over Winchendon from the north

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. ^{iv}. p. 100.

you have Waddesdon Manor on your right, with a long plantation of conifers, yew, box and other evergreens, running right up the hill. Just before you come to Winchendon proper is a meeting-house on the left, with the date 1793 on it, unpretentious and domesticated if it were not set amidst grave-stones, with a mounting-block outside the wall ; the whole strongly suggestive of days when religion was a serious business,—worth the riding for ; and one thinks of the long stable, almost underground, where the persecuted Friends put up their horses beneath the meeting-house called Jordans.¹

The more orthodox church of Winchendon is, from the road, equally unobtrusive, though decidedly more interesting in point of architecture. Norman, and Decorated work in chancel and nave, and a Perpendicular tower ; the south porch alone is worth a visit, with its primitive simplicity, a phrase which may also apply to the font. The chancel arch is of a simple character ; it is filled by a Decorated screen, and on the N. side is pierced by a squint which may be said to give a view of the altar to those in the N. aisle, or, if you choose, to give a view of the N. door from the altar. The opening for access to the rood-loft is also disclosed. On the floor of the chancel is an early sixteenth century brass, where Sir John

¹ This Winchendon chapel belongs to the Baptists ; one of the earliest of their meeting-places.

Stodeley and his mother lie, or perhaps once did lie, "under thys marbyll stone." At the west end of the nave are the old oak-benches; over the chancel arch is suspended a helmet with a peculiar visor.

The general idea of the use to which the "squint" in churches was put has been that it enabled those who sat in the aisles to observe the elevation of the Host at the high altar, whence the term "hagioscope." In that delightful book, Addy's *Evolution of the English House*, a very different use is found for it, of a truly secular character; it is there made the means of communication between the president of a lay tribunal, sitting in the chancel, and the door-keeper, the president being thereby enabled to signal orders to him, just as one rings a bell for the door to be opened for a departing visitor. Addy declares that it cannot have served its generally supposed end, because the altar was under the chancel arch, "so that squints, if they existed in early times, cannot have been intended to enable people to see the elevation of the Host at the altar."¹ He also says that squints are generally directed to the "south door or main entrance to the building"; but in the case of Over Winchendon the squint is through the north pier of the chancel arch (which is of a primitive type, as are the lancet-windows at the east end of the chancel),

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 184.

and commands a view of the north door, apparently not the principal entrance.

Looking at the excellent brass on the chancel floor of Sir John Stodeley, who was incumbent of the parish at the commencement of the sixteenth century, one wishes devoutly that his shade could return and clear up the matter; it might prove, like Huxley's idea of the tragedy Herbert Spencer was said to have written, "an Induction killed by a Fact," and the engaging theory of the Lord of the Manor winking through a hole to a hall-porter might be destroyed by three words from one to whom the opening was a matter of use, not of speculation.

Near to the church of Over Winchendon is a house which replaces one where there lived a succession of men of strong, if strange parts. There was the somewhat colourless Philip, Lord Wharton, who "seems to have been a zealous Puritan, much concerned with Preachers, Chaplains, &c., in his domestic establishment; and full of Parliamentary and Politico-religious business in public. He had a regiment of his own raising at Edgehill Fight; but it was one of those that ran away; whereupon the unhappy Colonel took refuge 'in a sawpit,' says Royalism confidently, crowing over it without end."¹ The impression left by reading his life in the *Dictionary of National Biography* is that he was a time-

¹ Carlyle's *Cromwell*, Letter LXVIII.

server; but let it count to him for artistic righteousness that he had "a very fine collection of the paintings of Van Dyck and Lely." At his death he left certain estates for the purpose of giving Bibles and some theological works each year to any child or young person born of poor parents in certain parishes in Buckinghamshire and three other counties where he was a landowner. The recipients were to learn seven Psalms by heart in order to qualify for the gift; the exercise of this condition is left to the discretion of the parish priest nowadays, and the theological works are replaced by a prayer-book.¹

Before the restoration of Winchendon Church the altar was removed from the wall and surrounded by seats, a relic of Philip's Calvinistic tendencies.²

Philip's son, Thomas, who succeeded him, "was such a master of the whole art of electioneering as England had never seen. He never forgot a face he had once seen. Nay, in the towns in which he wished to establish an interest, he remembered not only voters but their families."³

The same engaging manner perhaps gave him "the reputation of being the greatest rake in

¹ For instance, Amersham receives six Bibles and prayer-books annually, and requires two or three Psalms to be learnt, according to length. (Information kindly supplied by the Rector of Amersham.)

² Lipscomb, vol. i. p. 571.

³ Macaulay's *History*, chap. xx.

England. To the end of his life the wives and daughters of his nearest friends were not safe from his licentious plots." It has only to be added that "of all the liars of his time he was the most deliberate, the most inventive, and the most circumstantial," and that "what shame meant he did not seem to understand"—in order to see what a very curious character owed the title of his viscounty to Winchendon.

Although but indirectly, he places lovers of Yorick under a singular obligation, for he was author of a song which had a great vogue at the time and is familiar to all admirers of my uncle Toby as "Lillibullero"; this is called "the most effective blow that Wharton dealt against the old dynasty in 1687 . . . he is said to have boasted that he had sung a king out of three kingdoms."¹ "But in truth," says Macaulay, "the success of 'Lillibullero' was the effect, and not the cause, of that excited state of public feeling which produced the Revolution." To this mixture of qualities he added that of being a real sportsman, and owned the fleetest of greyhounds and fastest race-horses of his day; with these last it delighted him to "win plates from the Tories."

His son and successor had political ability in excess: converted the earldom of Wharton into a dukedom, but having squandered most of his

¹ *Dictionary of National Biography.*

estates, went abroad, and fought against England while serving under Spain, thus incurring an indictment for high treason and confiscation of his estates. "He is said by Pope to have been intimate with Colonel Charteris, the greatest scoundrel of his age, but he lacked Charteris's consistency, and was subject toague fits of superstition in the intervals of blasphemy and libertinage. He appears also to have been an arrant coward. His dominant characteristic was a kind of puerile malice."¹ The estates were purchased by the trustees of the will of John, Duke of Marlborough, in 1725; and in 1785 the house was pulled down, and the materials sold for £1400.

God be praised! the Whartons had ended.

WADDES DON

A remarkable transformation-scene took place forty years ago, when the Waddesdon and Winchendon estates were purchased by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, a member of the Vienna family, for a quarter of a million. The construction of roads and preparation of Lodge Hill for the reception of the house cost £55,000, and the first contract for the shell of the house was £87,000.² The hill-side was not previously

¹ *Dictionary of National Biography.*

² J. K. Fowler's *Recollections of Old Country Life*, p. 172.

wooded, and to prevent that rawness which a new garden must exhibit (as Halton does still), fully matured forest-trees were removed and planted on it, "taking sixteen powerful horses to move them. I have seen large specimens of evergreens pass through Aylesbury, drawn on a heavy framework by twelve or more horses, and brought the whole way from Kent."¹ The effect to-day is that of a garden assiduously cultivated for a couple of centuries, while as a matter of fact it was scarcely finished thirty years ago. The house, as has been hinted, does not please the English eye at close quarters; it is French in type and unsuited to the climate during a large part of the year; beneath a cloudless sky it would look far more at home, and the great formal flower-beds, mere geometrical patterns of colouring, excite wonder at the care and attention they must receive rather than any feeling of pleasure.

There are many really fine marble statues which one has an instant wish to shield from the rigours of our climate, and the whole effect of the place would be that of showy magnificence rather than of stately grandeur, if one's eye were not immediately led to the tremendous horizon all round the hill, across the rich Vale to the distant Chilterns on the east, and right into Oxfordshire on the west. In this vast landscape

¹ J. K. Fowler's *Recollections of Old Country Life*, p. 172.

there is more restfulness to the eye than in the minutely laboured gardens, where the very grass bordering the roads which wind up the hill is shaven like a lawn, and trimmed to a nicety which seems to fall short of the highest effort of Art—its concealment.

The parish of Waddesdon used to be divided into three “portions” for ecclesiastical purposes, each portion really forming a separate benefice with its own endowment, though there was but one edifice in which the three presumably officiated in turns. This division is supposed to have occurred before the time of Henry III., and as the patronage of each belonged to a separate manor, it has been thought that the endowments were provided by the holders of these manors, who combined to provide one church. In 1832, according to the Parliamentary Return, the first two portions were held by one man, and the third by another who was non-resident, the holder of the first two portions occupying the glebe-house. The three portions were consolidated by an Order in Council in 1876. Part of the land belonging to the third portion was to find straw and hay to litter the church,—a custom employed until comparatively late times; the original “hassock” was a bunch of coarse grass.

HILLESDEN

The most north-westerly point of the country referred to in these pages is a spot made remarkable by its history during the Civil War, and still famous for the beauty of the church which is nearly all there is to which we can attach the name of Hillesden. To come upon this fine building with a bare half-dozen cottages near it, and all standing in the midst of fields, strikes one with astonishment. It is the type of thing which Cobbett would have seized upon: "What a monstrous thing, to suppose that these churches were built without there being people to go to them; and built too, without money and without hands!"¹ Cobbett knew the explanation of such cases perfectly well, but for him any stick was good enough with which to beat "beastly Malthus, and his nasty disciples." If it was not known in his day, it is familiar now that, except in the case of some cities and towns, churches were founded for manors and not for parishes.

The lord who built and endowed the church naturally placed it conveniently near to his own house, where his family, dependents, and tenants could attend it; so that the key to its situation lies in its nearness to the manor-house rather

¹ *Rural Rides*, ed. 1908, vol. ii. p. 99, Ride from Salisbury to High-worth.

than to the village. In the case of Hillesden the house happens to have disappeared, and the isolation of the church is the more increased; there are dozens of cases in which the relation between the church and manor-house is very apparent, but usually a village has grouped itself round both; the 2500 acres or so which constitute the parish of Hillesden do not seem to have developed a community of that kind.

At the beginning of 1643 '4 the Royalist army was in possession of the country from Oxford to Banbury, whilst the Parliamentary forces held Newport Pagnell, where Sir Samuel Luke was governor, and Aylesbury.

Sir Alexander Denton, a staunch Royalist, fortified his residence, Hillesden House, which lay about midway between Oxford and Newport.¹ Early in February Colonel Smith was sent from Oxford with a small force to take command at Hillesden, where he at once began to extend the defences, employing a large number of men to dig a trench half a mile in circumference round the mansion and church. To revenge a foray he made, a force of 300 horse and foot came from Aylesbury to eject him; the attempt failed and a more elaborate expedition against him was planned by Sir Samuel Luke. Part

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. ii. p. 93, article by the Rev. H. Roundell, from which the account of the siege of Hillesden which follows is largely gathered.

of this last force, under Cromwell, encamped at Steeple Claydon,¹ and on 3rd March advanced against Hillesden House; the defenders prepared to receive them by placing five small pieces of ordnance on the church, and by making a kind of cannon with pieces of elm bound with iron. These and other preparations would have made the house good against any sudden attack had there been time to complete them, but the Parliamentary army had surrounded the house on the morning of the 4th, whilst news of their advance had not reached those in the house until the previous evening. The only terms Cromwell offered were unconditional surrender, and Colonel Smith decided to defend the place, though his scanty numbers and incomplete entrenchments proved but a poor protection against the Parliamentary army's attack. The second assault resulted in the capture of the church, and Colonel Smith surrendered "upon promise of quarter"—a promise scarcely kept, as some of the prisoners were put to death after surrender according to all accounts; others, "'Walloons, French, and other outlandish men,' appear in Cambridge streets in a very thirsty condition, and are, in spite of danger, refreshed according to ability by the loyal scholars, and especially

¹ On the wall of a barn on the south side of the main road in the village, and nearly opposite the road to Buckingham, a plate commemorates the fact; it was put there 8th August 1857.

by 'Mrs. Cumber's maid' with a temporary glass of beer."¹ A considerable sum of money was found behind the wainscot and beneath the leads by the soldiers on the following day, 5th March, but it was thought inexpedient to retain the house, which was burnt the same afternoon. It was afterwards rebuilt on the same site, and was at one time in possession of Coke of Norfolk (of all unexpected names to meet here!), but it was pulled down by the next owner, and the very foundations are only just discernible now.

The church, which was attached to Notley Abbey, had been rebuilt just before the Reformation, and was extolled by Sir Gilbert Scott as one of the most perfect examples of late Gothic architecture. He says that it was particularly dear to him "as having been the delight of my youth, and its study having led me to devote my life to the art of which it is so charming an example."² So that it has a good deal to answer for.

He minces no words about it: "It is carried out in every part with such extreme care, every detail is so thoroughly studied, and designed with such exquisite refinement of taste, as not only to defy criticism, but to excite the greater

¹ Carlyle's *Cromwell*, Letter XX.

² This is from a report by Scott on the bad state of the church in March 1873, printed in the *Records of Bucks*, vol. iv. p. 309. It was restored and reopened June 1875, Scott giving his services, and presenting the fine ceiling of the porch.

admiration the more closely it is examined. There is not a moulding, a corbel, a battlement, a pinnacle, or any other feature but what bears the impress of the careful and loving study of a first-rate architect."

In the churchyard are the remains of a fourteenth century cross, an octagonal shaft rising from a graduated base of three heights, retaining a part of a beautiful group of niches, with a fragment of one of the figures which they contained. "This cross derives additional interest from standing near the large pit in which the Royalists were buried, who fell at the siege of Hillesden House."¹

It is impossible for any wayfarer, however incapable he may be of distinguishing the various characteristics of different periods of architecture, to avoid being impressed profoundly by the exquisite north porch and the stair turret at the north-east corner of the church; in such a remote spot the effect is enhanced by being unexpected, and if that wayfarer should have the dismal horrors of Buckingham Church still fresh in his memory, the pleasure will be still further heightened.

Between Hillesden and Gawcott one September day a farmer was seen closely watching one of his horses, and drew attention to a fly hovering about the shoulder of the horse; in size and

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. iii. p. 153, article on "Ancient Stone Crosses."

colour it somewhat resembled a honey-bee, but seemed to promote great restlessness in the horse, though it had not actually settled upon it. The farmer called it a "becket," the common name being "bot-fly": it is one of those fiendishly clever characters in that fairy tale of science we call the history of parasites. The position of the insect was by no means accidental, for its deliberate intention was to lay its eggs in such a situation as would enable the horse, when irritated by the maggot hatching out, to swallow it, and so secure for this miserable larva a safe home in the alimentary canal, where it attaches itself and flourishes at the expense of its unhappy host; after a year it passes out of the horse's body and buries itself in the ground to commence its pupal existence. The farmer asserted that a neighbour had lost several horses the previous year from this dreadful insect.

CHAPTER IV

THE VALE (*continued*)

ASTON CLINTON

THOUGH the sun was shining brightly from its rising, the ground in the Vale was still iron-bound and glistening with hoar-frost; and the frozen footprints of the cattle were rigid as the matrices of a casting, with the piece of soil forced up between the divisions of the hoof projecting like a septum. Later on the force of the sun made the clay in the Vale sticky and the chalk on the Hills slippery, but the ground still remained white on the north side of hedges and hills (and even of furrows and mole-heaps) throughout the day. Close to Aston Clinton the line of the Hills to the east rose up like the wall of a mighty garden, balanced by a wall of mist in the west towards the valley of the Thame. In the intense winter quiet the distant crowing of cocks and barking of dogs came with a sudden distinction like the thawing of "words congeal'd in Northern air."

Aston Clinton has not the attractive features of some of its neighbours in the Vale, Weston Turville for example, and the church also has been

restored with considerable zeal. In the south aisle is the old font, disused, which has undergone many vicissitudes. When it was cast out of the church does not appear, but for some time it contained geraniums in the rectory garden; being deemed unworthy even of this humble office, it was next relegated to a ditch outside the churchyard, from which situation a layman rescued it to adorn the top of a rockery; and from that proud position it was eventually restored to the church, where it appears not greatly the worse for its adventures, and quite as well fitted for the performance of the rites of baptism as the modern structure erected for that purpose;—nor is the latter more beautiful.

DRAYTON BEAUCHAMP

From Aston to Buckland, and so by fields to Drayton Beauchamp, is a pleasant walk, leading one ever nearer to the Chilterns. The guide-books hungrily seize upon Drayton Beauchamp, because it is mentioned in a passage of Walton's *Life of Hooker*, and graced with a touch of humour more common to the author of the *Compleat Angler* than to the biographer of Donne and Hooker. The church, however, is well capable of standing on its own merits, and is a fine monument to the tender care bestowed on it by its present rector.

In the chancel are two fourteenth century brasses to members of the Cheyne family,¹ while immediately in front of the rails is a brass (unfortunately without a head) to a priest who died in 1531; he was not rector of this parish. There are two chairs of very early date in excellent preservation in the chancel; and most of the east window is original glass, so cleverly matched though with modern, that the difference scarcely appears from the inside.

At Drayton a remarkable custom used to obtain, which must have been highly diverting for everybody except the rector, who was expected to provide "as much bread and cheese and ale as the inhabitants chose" to consume on St. Stephen's day, whence the custom was called "Stephening." Tradition, dropping a kindly oblivion over his name, speaks of a certain rector, "a penurious old bachelor," who determined to put down the practice, and for that purpose ordered his housekeeper not to take down the shutters, or exhibit any sign of life at the rectory, when the day came round. The parishioners duly assembled and thundered upon the doors, without obtaining admission; however, the rector was seen through a keyhole signing to the old woman to keep quiet, and this inhospitable atti-

¹ That to the south has no inscription. We have already met the Cheynes, who were lords of the manor of Drayton Beauchamp, in Chapter II.

tude goaded some of the young bloods to climb to the roof by a ladder, and, removing some tiles, gain admission that way, and throw open the doors to admit "a hundred or two unwelcome visitors, who rushed into the house, and began to help themselves to such fare as the larder and cellar afforded." After this the parishioners pursued their course of "Stephening" each year, until the incumbency of Basil Woodd, who distributed money instead of food, but the parish outgrew his pocket and he discontinued it about 1827. Seven years later the Charity Commissioners reported that there was no evidence to "prove that the Rector was legally bound to comply with such a demand."¹ It is now the merest fragment of a legend.

BIERTON AND WING

"But who were the proprietaries of these bones—were a question above antiquarianism. . . . Had they made as good provision for their names, as they have done for their Reliques, they had not so grossly erred in the art of perpetuation."—Sir T. BROWNE: *Hydriotaphia*, chap. v.

There is no questioning the acts of irresponsible persons or local authorities, so that when one reads on a sign hanging from a lamp-post just out of Aylesbury Market Square that the distance to Wing is eight miles,—one reads a lie, which may

¹ The account of "Stephening" is from an article in the *Records of Bucks*, vol. i. p. 26 (1854).

easily be forgiven on a day when a soaked air and occasional showers keep the surface of the roads greasy, and each step ends in a slip, a handicap to walking increased by a north-easterly, or facing wind : the truth is that Wing is distant about seven and a quarter miles.

Soon after leaving Aylesbury one passes through Bierton, the scene of a murder in 1773. The story has often been told, but as it throws some light on the barbarity which lay beneath the polished veneer of the eighteenth century, it may be repeated here.

A man named Corbet, who lived at Tring, followed the honourable callings of chimney-sweep and rat-catcher, and in the carrying out of his duties came to the house of a small farmer, named Holt, at Bierton. Holt's daughter was then lying dead in the house, and Corbet is said to have seen through the window the bereaved father engaged in prayer. After waiting until the farmer had gone to bed, Corbet placed a ladder against the chimney, and, reversing his usual course, *entered* the house that way, and, like De Quincey's artists, "proceeded to operate." He then took such portable property as was handy, and went out of the house by the more orthodox means of the front door. This was certainly less dramatic than his entrance, but nothing more was required, artistically speaking, *after* the catastrophe. It was though a mistake

to go as he did, for it gave his dog an opportunity to come in unseen by his master, who shut it in the house.¹

When the tragedy was made known the next morning the dog was at the same time found and recognised as Corbet's. "Guided by the dog who followed the scent of his master," says our historian,² "the constable succeeded in apprehending Corbet at Tring, with some of the stolen property in his possession." He was tried, convicted, and sentenced to the gallows and the gibbet; the scene of the execution was about 17 chains from the house in which the murder was committed, and in the corner of a field on the right-hand side of the road leading from Bierton to Hulcott. The framework which served both for gallows and gibbet was about 18 feet high: after the cart had been drawn away and the first part of the sentence satisfied, Corbet's body was encased in irons and hung up. And now observe the effect upon the rat-catching chimney-sweep's contemporaries:

"Mary Lane, who lived servant at the farmhouse adjoining, could see, as she sat up in bed, the body of the murderer hanging from the gibbet ;

¹ J. K. Fowler (*Records of Old Times*, p. 160) makes Corbet leave by the chimney, and lets his dog sit on the doorstep,—a far less plausible story, as nothing would prevent the dog from following his master when he came down the ladder.

² *Records of Bucks*, vol. ii. p. 157, whence all this information is gleaned. The account was written in 1860 by the Rev. J. Wharton.

and the farmers who live higher up the village say that their parents were unable to open their windows until after the following harvest in consequence of the smell from the decomposing body. In 1774 a sporting character offered an old shepherd 2s. 6d. to climb the post, and draw a pair of black gloves over the hands of Corbet, and to hang a black scarf over his face, a feat which he successfully accomplished."

In 1795 the skull was still attached to the gibbet, and so remained until the irons rusted away, when they were kicked into the ditch and lost. "The remainder of the post was used for a gatepost." Concerning this a later account¹ says that "the last remains of the gibbet, which had been used as a gatepost for the rickyard belonging to Mr. Dickins of Bierton, was taken down 15 Aug. 1860. . . . Mr. Watts, chair-maker of Bierton, bought the piece with a view to working it up into various fancy articles." However that may be, the wayfarer of to-day, if he have a mildly morbid interest, may see a curiously massive piece of timber, very deeply cracked and protected by a sheet of zinc, serving as gatepost to a farmyard on the right-hand side of the road, just beyond the second milestone from Aylesbury,—obviously at the very spot where the gibbet-gatepost stood. It will, at any rate, serve him as a useful sub-

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. iii. p. 332, letter from C. Lamborn.

ject for moralising, and he may amuse himself by speculating on the possible uses of such a piece of timber, recalling Horace's biting line on a fig-tree trunk—

“Cum faber incertus scamnum faceretne Priapum.”¹

This was the last use of the gibbet in Buckinghamshire.

After leaving Bierton no more villages occur on the main road, and only one hamlet, Rousham, until one comes to Wing. In the whole distance the changes of level are slight. Wing is only 120 feet or so higher than at Bierton, five miles away, most of the last-named place being on the Oolitic beds, whilst Wing itself and the road to it is on the Gault. Still, Wing is sufficiently raised to give fine views, from the western end of the churchyard, of the grasslands below. The absence of timber is a sacrifice of the picturesque which adds greatly to the sense of wide expanse.

The church is not only well placed, but it is one of the most interesting in the county. It has, says G. Gilbert Scott,² “the three distinctive marks of all churches of the Roman missionaries: (1) The apsidal termination; (2) a confessionary crypt; and (3) the wide chancel arch, the successor of the triumphal arch of the basilica.” Consequently it may be called a “good ex-

¹ Sat. i. 8, 2.

² *Early English Church Architecture.*

ample of a church which must have been erected very shortly after the conversion of England." The crypt had been closed for many centuries, but was discovered and opened by Sir Gilbert Scott, who closed it again. It was, however, reopened under the direction of his son.¹ When first opened it was filled to two-thirds of its height with bones and earth, but is now cleared, and can be entered by a stair outside the church. Its purpose is explained as "being intended originally for the repose of martyrs who had witnessed a good confession by their deaths, but which ceased to serve this purpose when the system of placing relics in shrines above ground came into vogue."²

To give room for this crypt the apsidal chancel is raised considerably above the general level of the church, and in the centre of the chancel steps an opening used to give a view into the crypt, from which traces of its existence are still visible. Of the old entry into the crypt by stairs descending on either side of the chancel arch there is now no trace. The rood-stairs to the screens across the chancel arch and the chapel in the south aisle are still existing, the second one still retaining the door by which the narrow staircase was closed.

There is a singular brass at the west end of

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. v. p. 147.

² *Early English Church Architecture*.

the south aisle, and two fine tombs to the Dormers stand in the chancel.¹

On the exterior of the church, just above the clerestory windows, are dates in large iron letters, ranging from 1649 to 1792. If these indicate successive restorations they show that the church was not neglected, which is as well, for it was reported that "all the dressed stonework of the exterior seems to be some kind of fire-stone from below the chalk, and this has suffered from decay."² This loose expression may stand for Tottenhoe stone, a most inferior building material obtained from the Lower Chalk, and largely used in Buckinghamshire. Without its church Wing would not attract the traveller; it just falls short of the picturesque in a way difficult to define, it is so very negative.

HARDWICK AND WEEDON

The road from Aylesbury to Buckingham is an excellent one, and is generally frequented by the tramp, whom some regard as the Natural Man: he has usually come from Winslow, and

¹ The manor of Wing (belonging to the Abbey of St. Albans) was granted to Sir Robert Dormer at the Dissolution. His grandson was created Earl of Carnarvon, and perished at the (first) battle of Newbury, 1643. The daughter and heiress of the second Lord Carnarvon married a Stanhope, and this branch of the Dormers became merged in the Earldom of Chesterfield.

² *Records of Bucks*, vol. vii. p. 328, Report by T. Oldrid Scott.

talks darkly about work to be sought south and east of Aylesbury.

Hardwick and Weedon lie on the east side of this road and completely off it, though Hardwick Church is prominent to the passer-by on the road. Just beneath the tower is a tomb, not in the best repair at present, in which Lord Nugent gathered together the bones of the victims of the Battle of Aylesbury (now called the Battle of Holman's Bridge, from its having occurred at the point where the road crosses the Thame, one mile from Aylesbury). Archdeacon Bickersteth calls¹ the inscription upon it "suitable," and the concluding sentiment is unexceptionable and very dignified, but it is surely somewhat misleading when it describes the engagement as taking place "A.D. 1642, between the troops of King Charles I. under the command of Prince Rupert, and the garrison who held Aylesbury for the Parliament." The Archdeacon has himself just shown that the Prince, on his way to Oxford after Edgehill,² took possession of Aylesbury, and, hearing that Balfour (lieutenant-general of the Parliamentary forces) was approaching with Hampden in command of the foot, he went out to meet them, with the result that 200 Royalists and 90 of the Parliamentary party fell. These

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. ii. p. 264.

² Where "'we all thought one battle would decide it,' says Richard Baxter,—and we were all much mistaken!" (Carlyle's *Cromwell*, pt. ii. Preliminary).

numbers correspond fairly well with the remains of 247 found in 1818, and buried at Hardwick by Lord Nugent. As the Parliamentary force had come from Stony Stratford, it is scarcely accurate to describe it as "the garrison who held Aylesbury."

Lord Nugent lived at "The Lilies," a property which lies between Weedon and the main road. He represented Aylesbury in Parliament for many years prior to the passing of the first Reform Bill. After that event he held the position of Commissioner to the Ionian Islands for a short time, but contested Aylesbury again in 1837, when he was opposed by Mackworth Praed. The last-named, when asked by a heckler where he came from and where he lived, replied: "Well, my good fellow, if I am defeated, which you seem confident I shall be, it matters not where I live; but if you elect me, which I think you will, why perhaps at 'The Lilies,' for I hear it is to be let."¹ The point of this lay in the rumour that his lordship, "through impecuniosity, could not remain at 'The Lilies' much longer." Mackworth Praed won the seat at that time, but Lord Nugent represented Aylesbury again in 1847 and retained the seat until his death.

¹ J. K. Fowler's *Echoes of Old County Life*, p. 35. He appears to confuse the date of this incident, as he makes it precede Lord Nugent's appointment to the Ionian Islands.

"The Lilies" is said to be a corruption of "La Lees," having formed part of the property of the Lees of Quarrendon at one time.

Mention of Hardwick reminds one of the very excellent stories concerning its rector given by J. K. Fowler in the book just cited. The reader is begged to refer to them himself in this, which is the best of Fowler's books. The rector, Mr. Erle, was a hunting parson, though not always in the first flight. He used to say that he "seldom went with any but Baron Rothschild's hounds, as he wished particularly to promote Christianity amongst the Jews."¹

PITCHCOTT

It is good to be on Pitchcott Hill² on a day when a strong south-wester has blown away the rain-clouds and left the air brilliantly clear; in sheltered hollows the sallows are preparing to open out their catkins, snowdrops are in every cottage garden, and the thrush is singing in the earnest way for which "those blind motions of the spring" is answerable.

To the south Waddesdon and Over Winchendon, its twin hill, stand up boldly; to the east the wall of the beech-clad Chilterns is the boundary; and to the north, when the sun lights them, church after church may be marked—North

¹ *Echoes of Old County Life*, p. 98. The Erle stories extend from p. 96 to 101.

² "Pitchcott Hill" is a pleonasm, as "pitch" is a good Bucks dialect-word for hill: "You'll find no more'n one pitch agen you," to describe a road with only one gradient adverse to the traveller in it.

Marston in the foreground, Granborough beyond, and the Claydons away to the west—a glass might enable one to identify a dozen perhaps.

The church of Pitchcott itself stands well, though it is not of first-rate interest. In 1817 it was an excellent example of the evils of non-residency. The living at the time was probably worth about £300, but the incumbents preferred to draw this and pay a curate £50 a year to perform their duties; the church had to take care of itself. A visitor at that date found¹ “neither pew nor seat in the chancel; but a quantity of rotten and decayed matting lies in a heap at one quarter, which perhaps once served the communicants to kneel upon, but is at present as inferior to the litter used by the neighbouring farmers for their pigs as are the rough uneven stones on which it lies to the cleanly well-paved floors of their dairies.” The plight of the nave was rather worse, owing to a “dismal hole” in the roof. There were two pews and a few seats, but the rector’s pew had disappeared, as the tenant had removed the boards to make them into shelves.

NORTH MARSTON

So thoroughly has the spirit of faith been routed in these days of scepticism, that we look

¹ *Gentleman's Magazine*, pt. ii. pp. 397–399.

upon times and places when the credulous alone were orthodox with the respectful interest roused by a psychological study. Modern science, however, does not "hear with a disdainful smile" the stories of faith-healing at Loretto, Lourdes, or any less known shrine; the subjective treatment of disease has long been recognised as no matter for scoffing. For instance: "That the confident expectation of a cure is the most potent means of bringing it about, doing that which no medical treatment can accomplish, may be affirmed as the generalised result of experience through ages."¹ The great difficulty of obtaining reliable evidence obscures the question; there is vagueness both in the diagnosis of the disease, and in the extent and duration of the cure; and the historian of any cure is often in the same state of mental exaltation as is the patient, and may be said to believe sincerely that he sees—the thing that is not. "There is no falsity so gross," says Huxley,² "that honest men, and still more honest women, anxious to promote a good cause, will not lend themselves to it without any clear consciousness of the moral bearing of what they are doing."

The application of the point thus briefly made appears when we see that North Marston furnishes an instance of a shrine for faith-healing which

¹ Carpenter's *Principles of Mental Physiology*, ed. 1888, p. 684.

² *The Value of Witness to the Miraculous*,

had more than local fame in the fifteenth century. Not only do we know little of the cures effected (except from a few allusions to "ague" having been cured here), but we know nothing of the "Saint" himself, and are compelled to look upon his canonisation as but a courtesy title, so to speak. We do know though that he was rector of North Marston at the close of the thirteenth century,¹ and that at some uncertain time after his death his remains were enclosed in a shrine, and that a well, supposed to have received his blessing, became the object of pilgrimage for large numbers of sufferers,—with results most satisfactory to the ecclesiastical revenue of North Marston. At the close of the fifteenth century the shrine was removed to St. George's, Windsor; but the odour of sanctity left behind, together with the well (which, luckily for North Marston, was not "portable property"), still proved a great attraction to the original site.

To every saint a good legend is necessary, and Shorn was credited with the singular feat of conjuring the Devil into a boot. The difficulty of the feat at once gains our interest, and the most incredulous among us will protest against an attempt

¹ The account of Shorn, or Schorne,—sometimes Sir John Schorn,—which follows is derived from an article by the Rev. W. Hastings Kelke in the *Records of Bucks*, vol. ii. p. 60; and from an article by the Rev. W. Sparrow Simpson in the same publication, vol. iii. p. 354. The latter also contributed two papers on the subject to the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, vol. xxiii,

to explain this away¹ by a kind of "paranomasia" grafted on allegory. This dull commentator would have "boot" made "vote = a bargain," and "Devil" he would conceive as "an opprobrious name used towards some personal enemy of Sir John's"—the whole signifying the prosaic fact that Shorn got the better of Somebody!

The legend, which the wise will accept without objection, has borne most singular fruit in this way: In East Anglia there exist rood-screens which bear representations of Shorn in the act of squeezing the Devil into a boot, and there are pilgrims' pewter signs, and records of stained glass illustrating the same event. In the screen at Gately, Norfolk, Shorn is standing on a bracket, which strongly resembles one still extant at the east end of the south aisle at North Marston, where an altar formerly stood.

It is suggested that an image used to be on this bracket holding a boot in his hand, from which "a figure of the evil spirit might be made to ascend or descend at the pleasure of some cunning bystander, who, by thus exhibiting the wonderful miracle of the Saint, to the great consternation of the credulous, might really cure many who were suffering from nervous complaints."² In brief, the idea is that we have

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. iii. p. 76, article by R. Gibbs, who ought to have known better.

² Rev. W. Hastings Kelke, *loc. cit.*

here the *fons et origo* of our nursery's joy, the Jack-in-the-box; and when we think of the unnumbered examples of that ingenious toy, we perceive that never was man nor saint so glorified by abundance of statues.

The well was thought by some to have lost its virtues after the removal of the shrine, and it does seem as though its chemical properties were subject to variation. It is still strongly impregnated with chalybeate, and so abundant in quantity as to serve for a water supply for the whole village. It is at the end of the lane from which a footpath leads to Oving, and is now covered by a flat "lid" of concrete. Until within the last twenty years a slight building enclosed it. The area of the cistern (5 feet 4 inches square) still appears, and the depth (6 feet) may be assumed. It was thought from the size and construction of the cistern that it was intended for use as a bath, though the superstructure referred to above did not give enough room round the margin for this purpose.

Crofts, vicar of Winslow, and one of Browne Willis's correspondents, wrote to him¹ nearly two centuries ago respecting Shorn and the well: "Perhaps he built this well, or blest it. Good water is scarce there. This, not excellent, passes there; it retains to this day an excellent virtue to wash dishes, boile the pot, and is a comfortable

¹ Quoted in a paper by E. J. Payne, *Records of Bucks*, vol. viii. p. 440.

cordiall in a summer day to a thirsty cow." To the old inhabitants of North Marston this flippancy savours of irreverence.

Turning to the church again, there is, on the north wall of the chancel, a singular tablet to the memory of the vicar who managed to keep his hold upon the living during the thirty-four stormy years which followed 1660. It consists of a rudely graven hand pointing downwards, and the ill-written words (which remind one of the way Joseph Poorgrass used "to prent Farmer James Everdene's waggons, and 'a could never mind which way to turn the J's and E's"), after setting forth the name and station of the man they commemorate, close with the laconic phrase: "He lyse gust down thare."¹

This tablet is on the right of a door leading into the vestry [the spandrils of the arch being most beautifully decorated] in which is a fine piscina. A staircase leads to a chamber above which served as a watching-chamber for the priest, whose duty it was to keep the shrine in view—a peep-hole, now closed by a shutter, being provided for that purpose. This hole would also command a view of the "squint" which formerly penetrated the south side of the chancel arch.

There are at present six stalls with misericord

¹ In the proceedings of the Bucks Archæological Society (*Records*, vol. ix. p. 176) the inscription is given as "*dust* down there," which is either a misprint, or a woeful carelessness of transcription.

seats in the chancel, which show carving typical of the period. In 1820¹ there was also "a long, clumsy wooden desk," to which was chained the book of Homilies, and some other religious works. Time, and possibly "relic-hunters" (for they would have been no temptation to mere bibliopoles), have left only an imperfect black-letter Bible, which has been chained, and some fragments of the Paraphrase of Erasmus, Bishop Jewel's works, and some others; and these are not in the chancel.

North Marston chancel was restored by Queen Victoria, and "enriched" (one hopes that is the correct word) at the same time by the east window, in memory of John Camden Neild, who had left her the accumulation of a life of sordid avarice. He was the son of James Neild, who made a fortune as a goldsmith, and spent forty years in the most active philanthropy, largely connected with prison reform.² The son had every educational advantage, and was called to the Bar, succeeding to his father's fortune a few years later. He lived in Chelsea, though surrounded with none of the amenities usually associated with Cheyne Walk. The occasion of his visits to North Marston property gave him full scope for the exercise of his ruling passion. On returning to London, for instance, he would give the wife of one of

¹ *Gentleman's Magazine*, pt. ii. p. 580.

² Gibb's *Worthies of Bucks*, p. 292. The same reference is the source of a good deal of the information respecting his son.

his tenant farmers twopence to boil him two eggs, and he would then eat them with a penny roll as he walked to Aylesbury, and so save a breakfast at an inn. On reaching Aylesbury he would call at the "White Hart" and order cold beef for lunch. "On one occasion the waiter, coming unexpectedly into the room, found he had cut two large slices of bread and had laid between them two thick slices of beef and had pocketed them, thus saving a dinner. He was charged a shilling for it, which he most reluctantly paid."¹ As he considered himself unable to afford an overcoat, and presented a very shabby appearance, his fellow-travellers by coach on one occasion, when he had been visiting his Kentish property, "subscribed for a glass of brandy and water, and sent it out to the poor gentleman, who drank it off and thanked his benefactors for their kindness."² In spite of his economies he did not achieve happiness, and made at least one attempt upon his own life. His property was valued at a quarter of a million, and the Queen, to whom he left the whole, is said to have built Balmoral with it.

One of his executors was Archdeacon Tattam, the Orientalist, a man of extraordinary learning acquired in difficult circumstances. He was the son of a small farmer at North Marston, and managed to study a Greek grammar whilst he

¹ J. K. Fowler's *Recollections of Old Country Life*, p. 10.

² Gibb's *Worthies*.

milked his father's cows, by suspending it from a cord with a counterweight at the other end which was flung over the cow's back. This curious reading-desk is still preserved in the family.

The memorial to the miser instead of his philanthropic father offers a fruitful subject for a good deal of obvious moralising.¹

HOGGESTON

That is somewhat of a dark saying of old Burton when, speaking of a lover's rapture upon receiving "a good looke, a kisse, or some comfortable message," he goes on to say that "he is then too confident and rapt beyond himself, as if he had heard the Nightingale in the spring before the Cuckowe."² According to this writer's experience the hypothesis held good for 1911 as he set out for Hoggeston, but an average of the previous ten years gave two days in the cuckoo's favour. The blackthorns were in flower and the larks were in full song,—a typical day of spring with white clouds whipped to ribbons by a strong south wind, which carried one over unending pastures to Hoggeston.

¹ Lipscomb (vol. i. p. 342) gives a more pleasing, if less faithful, picture of J. C. Neild as "a gentleman of great opulence, who, among many instances of benevolence and patriotism, has considerably made allotments to numerous labourers of small portions of his land, to encourage industrious occupiers in spade husbandry."

² *Anatomy of Melancholy*, pt. iii. sect. 2, memb. 3.

The eye of experience is necessary to appreciate the meaning of the broken ground to the east and west of the village; it is a relic of a stockaded enclosure which served to protect the village from the "wild beasts and unfriendly neighbours" of Whaddon Chase on the north and Bernwood Forest on the south.¹

The church, with its wooden tower showing some massive timber-work inside, contains a recumbent effigy in a niche on the north of the chancel. Here the eye of faith is needed to see in it the monument of the fourteenth century Founder, the somewhat shapeless lump now in his hands representing a model of the church.

CUBLINGTON

From Hoggeston the road goes by Dunton, until a turn to the right is shown by a sign-post to lead to "Cublington by the Ford," a simple phrase but welcome, for the sign-post is a laconic informant. The ford in question is Littlecote Ford, and crosses the Cublington Brook, a tributary of the Thame famous to every follower of hounds.

Cublington has some splendid specimens of old thatched cottages to show, among them the very prototypes of domestic buildings. It has, too, the remains of an enclosure precisely similar to that at Hoggeston. At the close of the fourteenth

¹ *Victoria History of Bucks*, vol. ii. p. 33.

century the village was rebuilt to the east of its former site, so that we can infer that defences of this kind were no longer necessary at that date. A brass in the chancel floor of the church to John Dervyle, first rector, 1490, times the removal of the village. At the west end of the church is a gallery, not very decorative perhaps, but one may remember the words of J. H. Parker: "The 'modern fashion of abusing all galleries appears to me to be carried to an absurd length; galleries of several kinds were freely used in the middle ages, and were no dissight to the building."¹

In the middle of the old enclosure is a mound which the Ordnance Map chooses to call "Tumulus," but the best modern authority² prefers to look upon it as a Norman motte, of the time of Henry III. At present it is a most lively rabbit-warren, but well worth climbing for the sake of the view it affords across Creslow Great Ground and Whitchurch afar off. The path across Great Ground should be taken for the sake of the impression made upon one by this huge field. Flocks and herds of considerable size are quite lost in its great expanse. There are several ponds, and a horse-chestnut about the middle forms quite a landmark.

¹ *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1862, pt. i. p. 474.

² Allcroft's *Earthwork of England*, p. 548, note.



CRESLOW MANOR HOUSE.

CRESLOW

Some make the Middle Ages end with the death of the Black Prince in 1376. In the five and a half centuries since that date we have lost touch with the days

“Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o’ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife.”

So that it surprises us to see in the midst of the great Vale a tower which the hero of Crecy and Poitiers might have beheld; and as the famous pastures which stretch away to the north and east have been grass from time immemorial, he might have looked upon much the same scene.

As regards the name, some of the older writers, whom the moderns have not wholly disdained to copy, sought its origin in “Christ’s low, or meadow.” Whether the first syllable could stand for the Founder of Christianity the present writer is not ready to say, but “low” must certainly come from “hláu,” a tumulus or mound which served as a meeting-place. Had these old writers followed the safe plan of finding the earliest spelling they might not have fallen into the trap. Domesday has it Cresselai, fourteenth century spelling gives us Kerselawe, and a hundred years later we find Kirslowe; Saxton’s map of 1574 prefers Krestow, which is followed

by Speed (1666) and Morden (1700); Cary's map of 1824 renders it Kreslow, while his map of 1805 curiously omits it. A mere layman would wonder whether the prefix need be more than a proper name, such as still lingers in Kerr?

Precisely when the Hospitallers acquired the Manor of Creslow appears uncertain, but at the dissolution of the monasteries it was in their hands, and then passed to the Crown.¹

The Crown appointed a keeper of the pastures for a term of years, his duty being to attend to the feeding of cattle for the royal household. Benett Mayne was so appointed by Elizabeth "to the custody and keeping of the Mansion House, wherein the Herd or Keeper used to dwell; and also of the following closes and pastures, called Cubb Close 10 acres 3 roods; Sunny Hill 80 acres 2 roods; the Great Field 310 acres; Little Bushy Mead 16 acres; Great Bushy Mead 56 acres; New Field 156 acres 1 rood; Home Mead 69 acres 1 rood." Then, after setting forth the duties and responsibilities of his charge, she made him Herd and Keeper thereof for twenty-one years, and "in recompense of his charge, trouble and attendance she demised to him all the 60 acres of pasture which the Keepers have always had to themselves." Benett

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. i. pp. 255 *et seq.*, article by the Rev. W. Hastings Kelke, from which most of the following information is derived.

Mayne was bound "to preserve and keep the said closes from spoil, or overgrowing with nettles, or other weeds or bushes, and to do his best endeavour to destroy all moules and vermine; and to repair all the premises . . . and to have such allowance of 4d. per day, and £10 per annum, and such other allowances as formerly have been given to the Keeper."

Let it be hoped that weeds were banished and "vermine" kept from these goodly pastures, for evil days lay ahead for Creslow. In 1634-5 the estate was entrusted to Cornelius Holland, a man whom Browne Willis calls "a miscreant, base upstart," and Cole declares that "Judas was but a type of him, Cornelius the original." He had received the appointment as a hanger-on at Court, but this obligation did not prevent him from ranking among the regicides; and he was scarcely a good servant to the Parliament, for by neglecting his undertaking to execute repairs he required (and received) £700, money of that day, for "reparation." Cowley might certainly have made an exception of him when he mentioned "our late mad and miserable Civil Wars," and could not remember "the name of any one Husbandman, who had so considerable a share in the twenty years ruine of his Country, as to deserve the Curses of his country-men."¹

¹ Essay 4: "Of Agriculture."

Holland was, too, an iconoclast of the first importance, according to Coles "entirely dismantling and desecrating the chancels of Addington, East Claydon and Grandborough." It is a relief to poetic justice to know that he had to fly the country at the Restoration, as an attainted regicide. He went to Switzerland, "where he ended his days in exile and its consequent wretchedness."¹ Creslow was then granted in fee to Lord Clifford. In 1664 Alderman Backwell, the "goldsmith" or banker with whom Pepys had so many dealings (though he found him a "proud and vain-glorious" man), was tenant of Creslow, "and a tolerably successful farmer."²

Whether the desecration of the church of Creslow were begun or merely completed by the regicide seems uncertain. The last rector appointed was Thomas Davis in 1544. On Elizabeth coming to the throne he appears to have relinquished the living, and she took the "spiritualities and temporalities," which seems to mean all the available assets, into her own hands. From the abundance of bones which have been dug up round the church it seems that, before the dissolution of the monasteries, the advantage of burial, which the privilege of the Hospitallers enabled them to grant in times

¹ Gibb's *Worthies of Buckinghamshire*.

² *Ibid.*

of national interdict, was taken advantage of to a large extent. The fragment of the sacred building which remains is put to baser uses than the pious founder ever intended; it seems to be the original nave.

Of the house itself the tower and crypt beneath are assigned by Parker to the time of Edward III. The tower is built of stone, the walls being six feet thick. It is surmounted by a turret at one angle, access being gained by a newel stair. Beneath the tower is a crypt, hewn in the solid Portland stone, and near this another cellar, entered by a separate flight of stone steps. Before letting our imaginations run away with various ideas as to the use of these "dungeons," we had better digest carefully Parker's dictum that "the crypt was simply a store-room such as we find in many houses and castles of the same period."

The ground-floor chamber of the tower is 47 feet long, with a vaulted timber-roof. A doorway remains to mark some fifteenth century work, and considerable alterations were carried out in the reign of Charles I., as the square windows show. Seventy or eighty years ago four gables were taken down, reducing the size of the house nearly by one-half; the walls of an ancient courtyard are almost perfect, and even if much is lost, what remains is so beautiful, and seems to indicate so well the gradual progress of civilisation which

ceased to require a house to be a fortalice, that we may indeed be thankful.¹

Even in modern times the interest of Creslow does not appear to have decreased: at the beginning of the nineteenth century Mr. Westcar lived there and bred Hereford cattle which created "records" (in the modern abuse of the word).

According to Fowler,² "from 1799 to 1811 he sold twenty oxen for £2123 at various times. . . . These animals were five years old, worked beast, they had been harnessed to the yoke, and had therefore attained a great size." Westcar was one of the founders of the Smithfield Club Cattle Show. He is buried at Whitchurch, where there is a remarkable memorial to him.

The immense pasture which comes close up to the house is known as "Great Ground." We have already seen that it was computed to be 310 acres, but this is nearly fifty short of the actual number. At Whitchurch they have a fond belief that there is exactly an acre for every day in the year. What is more important is its nutritive value. Fowler declares that he has seen in it "upwards of 250 head of full-sized cattle, with

¹ In the case of Creslow the writer has had to depart from his rule of describing nothing which he has not seen; for the description of the interior he relies entirely on Hastings Kelke's description. The conduct of idle visitors has compelled the present tenant, Mr. Rowland, to discourage those who might be more genuinely entitled to gratify their curiosity.

² *Records of Old Times*, p. 101.

500 ewes and lambs, and 20 mares and foals, grazing together, and all rapidly fattening for market." Whilst doubting whether the mares and foals were actually "fattening for market," one may still be impressed by its richness, due, as elsewhere in the Vale, to the presence of the Kimmeridge Clay. Its prodigious size appears if the footpath to Cublington be taken. To be lost in it in a mist, if you should be following hounds on foot, is a still better way to impress its area upon you.

WHITCHURCH

The church is in the hands of the restorers, a piece of news one receives with mingled feelings until it is added that the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings has the matter in hand. Will they, one wonders, spare the rather hideous square pews? They may not be older than the eighteenth century, and they do not delight the eye, but they certainly make for restfulness and induce the frame of mind generally acquired by reading *Cranford*.

The old oak benches at the west end of the nave one feels sure they will preserve. There is always a fair amount of sound wood amongst much decay. Attached to one of them is a turned pillar with a hollow top, covered by a hinged iron lid with hasps; the lid is pierced, and so forms an alms-box.

The famous bas-relief to Westcar of Creslow has often been described, and the "points" of the prize ox commented upon, but nothing can do justice to the pious expression on the face of the sheep as they gaze upon their breeder, and they alone deserve a visit.

GRANBOROUGH

So the Green burgh, or hill, should be spelt. The interpolated "d" has so far obscured the name as to deceive Edmunds into citing "Grandborough" as derived "from the owner's name"—Grant.

Tradition will have it that the remains of Cornelius Holland were brought back from the exile in which he died and buried here. There is not the slightest evidence to support this, and considering the treatment meted out to the mouldering remains of the regicides at the Restoration, it is highly improbable.

Holland, as a matter of fact, was an extremely common name in the parish. It occurs with great frequency throughout the early registers, which date from the first half of the sixteenth century. It is continually preceded by the name of Benedict.

The Early English character of the church has been injured by subsequent restorations, in which no respect was shown for some of the original

windows in the nave. The church still contains many objects of great interest though, including an alabaster representation of the Crucifixion with the three Maries, dating from the twelfth century. It belonged apparently to the chapel of a Priory of St. Albans, on the Winslow side of the present parish.

There is also a remarkable chrismatory of pewter, of a fifteenth century type, with three receptacles for the sacramental oils. In the north corner of the east wall of the chancel is an almary, or locker, for the receptacle of the sacred vessels; and the altar itself and a chair beside it are fine specimens of early Jacobean work. In the chancel there also stands a wooden bowl with cover upon a pillar with tripod support, said to be a Puritan font; it is not more than six inches in diameter.¹

¹ The loving care of the present vicar, the Rev. O. C. Jones, towards the fabric in his charge is only equalled by his great courtesy in showing the various treasures mentioned above to an entire stranger.

CHAPTER V

THE BEECH-WOODS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

"In the Valleys (where they stand warm, and in Consort), Beech will grow to a stupendous procerity, though the Soil be stony and very barren ; also upon the Declivities, Sides and Tops of high Hills, and chalky Mountains especially."—EVELYN'S *Silva*, bk. i. chap. v.

CÆSAR'S famous denial that the beech was to be found in England has long been proved to be false. An important piece of evidence was the discovery of a Romano-British pile-dwelling at Hedsor in 1895, when at a depth of seven feet the foundations were reached, consisting of a platform of wood "little and big, merely thrown into the morass at haphazard, or at best into some particular spot which might require solidifying."¹ The largest logs composing this platform were of oak and beech, the latter showing not only that beech was a native of this country before historic times, but also the singular property it possesses of withstanding immersion in water, for the bark of the beech felt "hard as iron when a tool came in contact with it, in

¹ *Records of Bucks*, vol. vii. p. 539, where is reprinted the excellent description of the discovery read by Mr. A. H. Cocks before the Society of Antiquaries.

marked contrast to the cheese-like consistency of all the other kinds of wood."

It must have been a knowledge of this virtue of beech which induced our forefathers to advise immersion in water when using it for structural purposes. Evelyn, after pointing out that it is "exceedingly obnoxious¹ to the worm," recommends that it be put for ten days in water when "it will exceedingly resist the worm."

A still better example of this idea occurs in a book written in 1735.² There the sap is given as the cause of the "worm," and it is to be got rid of by throwing "into a Pond or River, and there let lain four or five Months, after which [the planks] must be thoroughly dried and layed twice." Another method was recommended for the "smaller sort, whose Bodies do not exceed twelve or fourteen inches thick." These when hewn and squared are to be stacked a foot above the ground and a fire is to be made under them of furze, straw and shavings "to burn all their out-sides till they have a thin, black Crust." This is intended to embitter the wood, "because the Worm undoubtedly has a taste, tho' an Insect, and therefore will consequently leave the tainted Wood." This may be called the most primitive form of creosoting.

The third method is still more entertaining than

¹ This word is to be taken in its neutral connotation of "liable."

² Ellis's *Chiltern and Vale Farming*, p. 94.

these, based as it is upon a deliberate lie. It consists in felling about a fortnight after mid-summer, "for then its Juices are at the thinnest, and strongly employed in Branches, Leaves and Fruit; and then it is the Body has the least share of Sap in it." It can only be said that this would render the timber absolutely useless, as it would become "doaty," to use the Chiltern forester's phrase of to-day.

During the currency of the forest laws the system applied to the Buckinghamshire beech-woods was that of "coppice with standards," and this must have obtained until 1677, for then it could be said¹ that "in the Chiltern country they sell their under-wood Coppices commonly at eight or nine years' growth, but their tall-wood, of which they make tall shids, billet, &c., at no certain time; nor sell they these woods all together, but draw them as they call it, almost every year some, according as their wood comes to be of a fit scantling." It must be borne in mind that undergrowth for the making of faggots was of the greatest importance for fuel down to quite recent times,² and that the provision of beech for this purpose and for the manufacture of charcoal was hardly secondary to its use by the

¹ Dr. Plot's *Natural History of Oxfordshire*, p. 94.

² Men of seventy living near Great Missenden declare that they never saw coal before they were grown up. The only fuel was faggots—and dried cow-dung. See also Note E at the end of this book.

turner. In 1805 Repton wrote¹ that the Buckinghamshire beech-woods "have generally more the appearance of copses than of woods. As few of the trees are suffered to arrive to great size, there is a deficiency of that venerable dignity which a grove ought always to possess."

The highest results from the large-timber point of view can never have been obtained in this way; for the beech only produces the tallest and straightest trees when grown sufficiently close to furnish a fairly dense "canopy" of foliage; the individual trees then draw each other up. The best local practice in the art of beech-wood management consists indeed of the early removal of heavy-topped trees, and the proper spacing of these crowns of foliage. The most satisfactory yield is obtained by the "selection system," which may be described as a thinning out of the wood every thirteen years, leaving each time a fairly large stock still standing. A favourable example may be found in a wood to the north of Wendover filling a "bottom" where there is a greater depth of loamy soil than is common on the Chilterns. Here one-quarter of the trees (equivalent to two-fifths of the timber) was taken, and the stock left consisted of 123 trees to the acre, containing nearly 2000 cubic feet.²

On some estates a close canopy is found to

¹ *Landscape Gardening*, p. 61.

² *Journal of Forestry*, vol. ii. p. 4, article by Sir H. R. Beevor.

be harmful to the seedlings, and the plan of management inclines more towards clear-felling; the local conditions of soil and situation having a considerable effect.

It is rarely necessary to plant beech on the Chilterns; natural regeneration can be counted upon to furnish plenty of seedlings, if only the rabbit is reduced to his proper place, which is the vanishing-point.

It is thought by some that modern game-keeping injures natural regeneration by destroying the enemies of the mice, which are consequently left to eat the mast. This opinion is not held by all, and it is at least certain that in Evelyn's day the toll levied upon the seed of beech by "squirrels, mice, and above all the Dormice," made itself felt.

The system of pannage in feudal times was thought to encourage natural regeneration, the hogs trampling some of the mast into the ground, and so sowing it. On the other hand, they must have devoured great quantities which now have a chance of germinating.

One frequently sees notice-boards in a Chiltern beech-wood prohibiting the removal of leaves. These may date from times when the fallen leaves were much used for stuffing beds. All the old writers allude to the practice, which must have been very injurious to the beech, as they form vegetable mould, and keep the soil mulched.

Beech is usually sold felled, the purchaser to remove within a year. The fellers are paid by piece-work, 5s. for each hundred cubic feet felled. The demand for beech near to the centres where it can be worked up is an increasing one, and prices have advanced a further 2d. per foot this year (1911). The smaller trees fetch from 9d. to 1s. per foot, and the large ones twice that amount. Some specimen trees from the Penn estate have realised as much as 2s. 6d. These very large trees are used for the manufacture of bowls and "barn-shovels." The bowls are cut from the complete circumference of the tree, and the core further scooped out, and so on until a whole nest of bowls of graduated sizes is obtained. Chesham is the centre of this industry. More moderately sized timber is used for the upper part of chairs and is consumed at High Wycombe, whilst from the smallest the chair-legs are made either at cottages or in the woods, as will be described at length later on.

Of recent years a most serious menace to the prosperity of the Chiltern beeches has appeared in the shape of the beech coccus, an insect pest which appears to be spreading with alarming swiftness in some districts. No efficacious remedy—short of felling—has been found as yet. The difficulty of thoroughly spraying a large number of trees in a small area is as obvious as its great cost. Though these pests sometimes

have a period of maximum virulence and then diminish, the immediate outlook is not very agreeable.

Beneath beech growing with a fairly dense canopy the only things which will grow are yew, holly, and the parasitic orchidaceous plants; but it is a most curious fact that in many places after the felling of beech, below which nothing has grown for thirty years, the first thing to come up is the foxglove, the beautiful clusters of its bells quite covering a clearing in the wood.

CHAPTER VI

TWO CHILTERN INDUSTRIES

CHAIR-LEG TURNING

WITHOUT plunging into polemical economics one may lament the introduction of the Austrian bent-wood chair, a piece of furniture which affords no relief to the eye and but a poor support for the limbs, besides possessing an undue inclination for that "solution of continuity" of its parts which sooner or later must await all man's handiwork. In the case of what is known as the "Windsor" chair we have an immensely more durable article, which is still finding employment for a very large number of workers in the Chilterns. Whether or not its name is to be derived from the fact of chairs having been sent to market by water from the royal town, let abler historians declare; but their manufacture is of no great antiquity. "In 1830 there were said to be only two chair manufacturers in High Wycombe, which has since become the centre of the industry."¹ Giving

¹ *Victoria History of Bucks*, vol. ii. p. 110. When Queen Victoria visited Disraeli at Hughenden in 1877, we are told (by the *Court Circular*

evidence before a Parliamentary Committee in 1899, Mr. T. Glenister, one of the largest manufacturers, could "well remember the time when there were only about six manufacturers," when he was a lad, and his father engaged in the trade. At the time of speaking he placed the number at 120 or 130.

The application of steam-power to big saw-mills has indeed superseded the old pit in which two men laboriously worked a long blade, but the "underwork" of the chair still finds employment for a great many men either at their own homes, or actually in the woods at the very spot where the material which they work up is grown. The men who thus work in the woods are called "chair-bodgers,"—though one of them remarked that "if he were afore a magistrate, he'd call himself a chair-turner." Whether this word is applicable to any man "working at a trade, not a master-workman,"¹ or whether it be not rather

of 15th December of that year) that "on passing through the triumphal arch formed of chairs, the chief manufacture of the borough, her Majesty directed the carriage to stop, so as to carefully inspect it." Surely this was the apotheosis of the Windsor chair!

In opposition to this comparatively late use of beech for chair-making it should be said that Priest's *Agriculture of Buckinghamshire*, 1810, mentions "the manufacture of chairs in Bucks and in London" as "the general use" to which beech is applied.

¹ This meaning attaches to "bodge" in parts of Bucks. See Mr. Cock's "Vocabulary of Bucks Dialect Words" in the *Records of Bucks*, vol. ix. p. 129.



THE BODGER'S WORKSHOP.

a genuine derivative of the A.S. "boc," a beech-tree,¹ let Dryasdust determine.

A "fall" of beech is put up to auction,—such a fall of the winter 1909–10 was sold at 36s. per load of 40 cubic feet; the purchaser then employs the "bodger" to turn it into chair-legs, paying him by piece-work, at which he earns about 23s. a week. He is often assisted by a boy, who is paid by him, not by the buyer of the timber; in this way a training is afforded to a lad for the highly skilled labour turning entails. First, however, the fellers enter the wood and make all the "top and lop" into "kindling faggots," which are sold at from 5s. to 6s. a hundred, according to their accessibility from a good road for carting. Then come the "bodgers" and erect their pole-lathe,—a simple but most effective way of obtaining power for the turning. A long pole is secured at one end horizontally (though with an upward tilt) to a post, the upper or loose end having a cord attached which is fastened to a treadle at ground-level; the cord is given a turn round the piece of wood it is desired to turn, which is then inserted in the lathe, and the pressure of the foot on the treadle consequently causes the wood to revolve rapidly while the pole is pulled down-

¹ This idea was first suggested by Mr. A. H. Allcroft in his *Earthwork of England*, p. 246, note. In a private communication Mr. Allcroft says that the fact of the word "bodger" or "botcher" being confined to Bucks, and chiefly used of the turners, is suggestive.

wards, and, on moving the foot, the elasticity of the pole makes it resume its former position, while the wood turns in the opposite direction. The cutting is only performed during the downward thrust of the treadle; no use is made of the revolution in the opposite direction, while the pole recovers its former position.¹ The pole may be of fir, ash, or maple, the last two being preferred, though it is not always easy to meet with a straight ash-pole. Only seasoned wood is suitable, as a freshly cut pole will soon bend at the point where it rests on a fulcrum. A good pole, which does not "spring," will last for three or four years with daily use. The lathe, strongly constructed of stout boards, and more than half the pole (which is 12 to 15 feet long), are protected by a kind of wigwam formed of pieces of timber inclined to one another at an acute angle and "thatched" with fine twigs; the big heaps of shavings which speedily accumulate are piled against this and make a fairly warm and dry protection.² At the back of the lathe the "shop" is left open to give light to the bodger;

¹ In a letter to the present writer, Mr. Henry Balfour, of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, kindly states that the earliest representation of the pole-lathe known to him is of the thirteenth century in France. He is inclined to "link the pole-lathe of Europe with the thong-lathe of India and elsewhere in the East."

² This is the very type of the simple "house built on crucks" so often referred to by Mr. Addy in his excellent *Evolution of the English House*. He mentions the charcoal-burner's hut, but not this primitive "shop," as it is generally called; indeed it is not a dwelling.

generally this opening is covered with a white cloth ; a kind of screen also protects the entrance, and the shelter proved effectual during the penetrating north-easterly winds which brought in April 1911.

The bodger saws his wood into proper lengths, and then splits these blocks by means of small axes (which are obtained from Sheffield, and bought by weight at 1s. per lb. ; a good-sized axe will weigh 4 lbs.). This splitting of the wood is very important, as the legs to be turned from the wood so split are far stronger than if the wood were sawn across the grain. The pieces when split are further trimmed on a "shaving-horse" with a draw-shave or spoke-shave. The shaving-horse has a vice-like grip controlled by a foot-lever, so that the wood can be rapidly inserted and firmly clasped while it is being shaved. The pieces when trimmed are afterwards tested for length with a gauge, and sawn off if necessary. The legs of Windsor chairs are always eighteen inches long. A good worker can turn three to four dozen of these pieces an hour according to the nature and condition of the wood. He puts the shaved piece in the chucks of the lathe and rapidly adjusts it for a true centre ; he then begins to indicate the beading, having marks cut on the lathe to show him where these should come. The whole operation of the turning is performed

with a rapidity which astonishes the unskilled looker-on.

Ordinary "Windsor" legs are sold at about 9s. 6d. a gross including "stretchers"; "ball-legs" (having a ball instead of the ordinary beading of Windsor legs) for arm-chairs would fetch 6d. more. It must be remembered that the front and back legs of a Windsor chair are joined by "stretchers," and a third stretcher unites these two, so that seven separate pieces, including the legs, form the underwork of the chair. A "set" would comprise seven gross of turned pieces accordingly, and be sold for four times 9s. 6d., *i.e.* 38s. If the wood is fairly free from knots, a load (40 cubic feet) will make rather more than two complete "sets," or over 2000 pieces of turned wood. The shavings are put into bags and sold for kindling, &c., at 3d. a bag.¹

Some of the bodgers work at the turning throughout the year; but most of them take on mowing, reaping, and thatching work in the summer, and come to the woods when the sap is down, and it is possible to fell the timber. It is better, in some ways, to work on the wood of the previous season's fell. In that case the

¹ In an article by Mr. W. Dallimore in the *Kew Bulletin* (No. 2, 1911) it is stated that the method of working in the woods is more wasteful than methods which obtain in factories. Loss occurs in splitting instead of sawing, and rough pieces of timber, of which the bodger cannot avail himself, "might be converted into small articles of one description or another in a factory."

turned legs and stretchers, after being stacked up so that the wind can pass through them, are ready for market in a week or two.

The seats and backs are now cut with a band-saw at High Wycombe and then sent out to the villages where they are smoothed and finished off by the workers at their homes. It should be said that the seat is always made of elm. The various parts are finally put together in the factories at Wycombe.

It is necessary to sharpen the turning-tools every day, but the splitting ones may go for two or three months without recourse to the grindstone.

The bodger's life is an arduous one, and not too well rewarded, but it has its compensations. His is the most glorious workshop conceivable. The beech-wood is generally on a slope, and between the smooth, dark¹ trunks the ground is covered with the splendid russet of the dead leaves. There is a cleanliness about the turner's craft—so utterly removed from the dust and dirt of factories; free, too, from all smoke, save that fragrant, pungent incense which goes up from the fire of shavings burning outside his hut, on which his dinner is cooking. The riving sound of the axe, or the peculiar note as the

¹ The silvery appearance of the beech-trunk is the result of exposure, and does not occur in a wood where the trees are standing closely together,

chisel takes long shavings off the wood in the lathe, replace the monotonous roar of machinery; and instead of the raucous "hooter," the laughing note of the woodpecker sounds about his workshop.

THE SANDSTONE WORKERS

The complexity of civilised life makes us accept without inquiry a good many things which deserve our notice. Few indeed take advantage of a street "crossing" with any thought of the cost at which the very stones they traverse were obtained;—a crossing was surely an early luxury in a climate favourable to mud.

High up among the hills to the north of High Wycombe runs one of those narrow valleys so typical of the district; the sides are cultivated, the crests of the hills are covered with beech, and the road running up the "bottom" is overshadowed here and there by mighty wych-elms. The northern hill and valley are known as Denner Hill and Bryants Bottom. South of these come Upper and Lower North Dean and Naphill, terminating at Walter's Ash.

On both crests are to be found—deep down below a bed of clay used for brick-making at Naphill—blocks of sandstone, of a white, crystalline appearance, and intense hardness. They are found by probing with long iron skewers with a T-shaped

handle, varying from 6 to 14 feet in length, and known technically as "snipers." The difference between a large flint and a sandstone-block is easily detected by the practised hand, by the scraping which occurs when a flint is struck, while the sandstone feels absolutely solid. By making a succession of borings in this way the general shape of the stone can be determined, and it is then dug out. If too large it is split *in situ*, and removed in pieces of about two hundred-weight each, by means of a windlass operating over a pulley which is suspended from three inclined props,—a kind of rude derrick.

These pieces are then cut into the square "setts" of which the crossing is composed.

This process of excavation has been continued to a depth of 64 feet. The largest block found at Walter's Ash weighed over 350 tons.¹ This block split quite vertically, and one workman standing on the shoulders of another was unable to touch the top of the stone, so that it was at least 12 feet high.

The boulders are split by means of a series of mortice-holes a few inches apart, into which pieces of hoop-iron are inserted, and a wedge is driven between them with a 28 lb. hammer.

The intense hardness of the stone ("Heart

¹ Denner Hill workers are sceptical about this figure, but the blocks found at Walter's Ash are immensely larger than those obtained at Denner Hill,

of oak and Denner Hill" is a local proverb of durability) made a fine dust in the working of it, which attacked the workman's lungs, even if protected by a respirator, or "muzzle," as he calls it. After five years his breathing was affected, and he then had to turn to the land or some other employment for two or three years, if he wished to escape evil consequences. The industry is but of recent origin, and the men have now learned from the workers of the similar "sarsen-stones" of Wiltshire to use a tub, sawn in half and filled with sand, on which to place the stone they intend to cut. This tub is what masons call a "banker," and, by standing to windward of it, and regulating the air-current by means of wattled hurdles, the dust is blown away and the employment rendered far more healthy. The old plan was for the man to sit on a sack on the ground, and leaning over the stone he inhaled the dust made by the strokes of his hammer.

The work is paid for by piece-work, and the process of excavation is apparently not counted, so that the easy discovery of a large block is of the first importance to them.

The large crossing before Windsor Castle, as one approaches it from the Great Western Station, is constructed of blocks from Denner Hill.

It is after all but fitting that the extraction and dressing of these stones should be arduous,

for immense must have been the forces which could cement the sands of the Woolwich and Reading beds with silica, and so furnish a material of which man avails himself when he wants a combination of extreme hardness and toughness.

CHAPTER VII

THE RAILWAY SYSTEMS OF MID-BUCKS¹

THE historian of the future will have to devote a good deal of space to the railway history of any given district ; the story of the development of the various lines which now serve Buckinghamshire is in many respects noteworthy and typical of English railway history generally.

It has been said that George Stephenson originally designed the London and Birmingham line to follow the direction now taken by the Metropolitan-Great Central line to a large extent, and that the strong opposition of landowners prevented the adoption of this plan. However that may be, it does not appear that Parliament was asked to sanction such a scheme ; and the more northerly route chosen, with which we are all familiar as the London and North-Western line, was opened as far as Bletchley in 1837. The first tributary to flow into this stream (if the "bull" may be allowed) was the line from

¹ A large part of this chapter (down to 1880, say) is due to the very kind assistance of Mr. J. G. Rowe, the Secretary of the Aylesbury and Buckingham line throughout its existence. The reader must give him credit for whatever is most interesting, and his own words are often used without being especially indicated.

Aylesbury to Cheddington, opened for traffic in 1839 amidst great rejoicings. There were free journeys to Cheddington and back all day, the town was given up to holiday-making, fireworks were let off at night, and a medal was struck to commemorate the event. The promoters of this branch were local men. George Carrington of Missenden took the chair; Henry Hatton, a solicitor of Aylesbury, was secretary; and Robert Stephenson was the engineer.

Some years later it was proposed to extend this branch to the south-west of Aylesbury, to Thame and Oxford. The financial panic of 1846 and the collapse of King Hudson made this scheme stillborn, as was the Claydon to Aylesbury portion of the Buckinghamshire Railway, joining the Bletchley to Oxford and Banbury to Claydon lines at Claydon, with the idea of joining it to the Cheddington-Aylesbury branch, and so giving an alternative route from Oxford, Banbury, and Buckingham to London. This Aylesbury and Thame Railway was provisionally registered in 1845. Two of the directors were Sir Harry Verney and Dr. Lee, and the capital proposed was 4000 shares of £25 each. A clause in the prospectus read, "No shares will be appropriated except to parties who can give most unexceptional references," which was meant to exclude the unsubstantial nominees of shady speculators.

The abandoned Claydon to Aylesbury line served as the foundation of a survey made by W. M. Brydone in 1859, which did not obtain a complete blessing at Euston, so to make use of the survey-work which had been done the promoters decided to adopt the abandoned part of Stephenson's line and connect Aylesbury with Claydon,¹ and therefore with Buckingham and Banbury, and Oxford and Bletchley.

The plans for this route were shown to the Duke of Buckingham, then Marquis of Chandos, who was at that time chairman of the London and North-Western Company, and intent upon improving his Wotton estate.

When the Duke saw that the line was to pass between the hills of Quainton and Pitchcott, he remarked emphatically that he did not see how it could benefit him unless it came south-west of Quainton Hill; in that case he would take the chair and subscribe £5000. The scheme was therefore amended, and involved the construction of an additional four miles in that form.

Sir Harry Verney, through some of whose land the line would also pass, agreed to join the Board, and the Claydon Junction was re-named Verney Junction in his honour.² Sir Harry Verney was

¹ There was no station at Claydon Junction then; it was merely the junction for Buckingham.

² Similarly the Great Central Company named the first station on their own line, after leaving Quainton Junction, Calvert, which had been Sir Harry's name before he assumed that of Verney.

chairman of the Buckinghamshire Railway (joining Oxford and Banbury to Bletchley), and he often recalled an incident which took place when George Stephenson was his guest. They were standing on the high ground near Botolph Claydon, when "Geordie" pointed to Pitchcott gap and said, "That is the route for a line to London, and some day one will be made in that direction whoever opposes it." This prophecy was fulfilled when the pupil of his son, Charles Liddell, was engineer for the Rickmansworth to Aylesbury section of the Metropolitan Railway, and for the joining together of that system with the Great Central line. But this is anticipating the story. The Aylesbury and Buckingham line was opened in 1868, after many difficulties. The amount of capital subscribed by the public was insufficient, and the contractor had to be paid in scrip. Meanwhile the Duke of Buckingham had ceased to be chairman at Euston, and the London and North-Western Company was by no means so ready to assist the Aylesbury and Buckingham Company; indeed the junction at Aylesbury was never effected in practice, though most of the land was acquired for that purpose, and lines were laid down in accordance with the first scheme, and exist to this day beneath Walton Street.

As the London and North-Western Company was no longer willing to afford facilities for work-

ing the Aylesbury and Buckingham line, that company was forced to turn to the Great Western Railway, which, five years previously (1863), had opened a branch line from Princes Risborough to Aylesbury. This branch, by the way, was the first to be converted from the broad to the narrow gauge, the work being carried out just after the opening of the Aylesbury and Buckingham line. Under this arrangement with the Great Western, that company provided trains at a fixed mileage charge, and the Aylesbury and Buckingham Company provided the station staffs and attended to the upkeep of its own permanent way.

The unfortunate Aylesbury and Buckingham line was not finally much more successful with the Great Western than with the London and North-Western, that company now doing all it could to divert the traffic from the London and North-Western main line and Buckinghamshire branch, to Aylesbury and stations on their Wycombe branch, the direct and shortest route, and sending it forty miles round by Oxford. What was particularly unfair was that goods and coal rates were not allowed to apply by the Aylesbury and Buckingham route.

In 1874 the Great Western obtained power to absorb the Aylesbury and Buckingham line,—a policy which commended itself to the general manager of the day, James Grierson; but before the terms of transfer had been arranged he died

and was succeeded by Henry Lambert, who was by no means so alive to the potentialities of the route, and declined to proceed with the matter.

There was one man more sensible of the value of the Aylesbury and Buckingham line; this was the chairman of three companies, the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire, the Metropolitan, and the South-Eastern Companies, Sir Edward Watkin, who had at one time been secretary of the Buckinghamshire Railway. He conceived the great idea of forming a physical connection between these three systems; he told Gladstone that he hoped to have the privilege of running him in a through-train from Hawarden to Dover, and even the Channel Tunnel came within his far-reaching conceptions.

In pursuance of this idea (which surely argued possession of an imaginative faculty akin to genius) he gradually extended the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire southwards, and the Metropolitan northwards; the Aylesbury and Buckingham line offered itself as a connecting link for a small portion of the way, and was taken into the Metropolitan system in July 1891. On 1st September of the following year the portion of the Metropolitan, of its own construction, from Chalfont Road to Aylesbury, was opened, and a great step towards the

realisation of Sir Edward Watkin's dreams was thus effected.

It was not, however, destined to be developed in its entirety—"Dis aliter visum;" and his death snapped the thread which united the fates of the three companies; their various traffic problems became incapable of solution by the removal of a common denominator, so to speak.

By 1898 the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire (now become the Great Central Railway) had reached Grendon Underwood, or rather Quainton Road, where it joined the old Aylesbury and Buckingham line.

It should be mentioned that Quainton Road was the terminus of the "Oxford and Aylesbury Tramroad," a line promoted by the Duke of Buckingham for the benefit of his estate. Financial difficulties prevented it ever being continued beyond Brill in the south-west. It was constructed for, and for some time worked by horse-power. It is now owned by the Metropolitan and Great Central Joint Committee, and worked by steam locomotives as a branch line.

The Metropolitan route to London was soon found to present considerable difficulties to the Great Central. The steep gradients made it ill adapted for the running of fast through traffic, which was further hindered by the necessity the Metropolitan was under to run stopping trains

for the service of populous places between Aylesbury and London; and the Great Central was soon compelled to seek another access to its Marylebone terminus.

This was found by joining with the Great Western, who were intending to make a line from Acton to High Wycombe, where, it must be remembered, they already had a branch from Maidenhead, which continued on to Princes Risborough, and thence to Aylesbury in the north, and Thame and Oxford in the south.

The Great Central made a line from Grendon Underwood, passing near Ashendon, to Princes Risborough, and from there to Northolt ($24\frac{1}{2}$ miles) they shared a double line with the Great Western, which was increased to four tracks of rails at the stations, to permit fast traffic to pass through while stopping trains were in the station. At Northolt the Great Central approached the joint line from Neasden, where they were already established, by a burrowing junction.

Subsequently the Great Western has obtained a shorter route to Birmingham, with very easy gradients, by constructing a line from Ashendon. The approach to the Great Western-Great Central joint line at this spot is effected on the up-road by a flying junction.

Many were the lines projected at different times, and carried to various stages, which

would have passed through Buckinghamshire. Such was the London, Bucks, and East Gloucestershire Railway, one of Charles Liddell's "fighting" projects. It was defeated; but the London and North-Western and Great Western Companies were sufficiently alarmed by the menace to their South Wales traffic to purchase the Shrewsbury and Hereford line.

The Act for the London and Aylesbury line of 1870 was granted by Parliament, but abandoned, as the gradients and curves were too many and too severe for a main line.

An Act obtained in 1862, known as Piercey's line, would have passed from Rickmansworth (L. & N.W. station) to Chesham, directly down the Chess valley; and one cannot thank that Fate too much which decreed that, although extension of time was granted, this project never came to anything.

Still another scheme was the Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire line of 1875, which was not carried far. Several other projected routes could be mentioned which affected or threatened to affect other parts of the county of Buckinghamshire; but if the total sum spent in promoting various railways to pass through the Missenden valley and Aylesbury alone could be ascertained, it would be found sufficient to construct many miles of useful lines; while the only people who derived benefit from these projects were engineers

and lawyers, who shared the oysters between them, and left promoters and opponents alike nothing but the shells, with which they might build grottos as monuments to their lack of foresight.

CHAPTER VIII

AGRICULTURAL SHOWS

No better way of seeing the activity of the country-side focussed upon a small area is to be had than by attending the shows annually held at Tring and Halton, or intermittently at Waddesdon. Here you may see what kind of potential beef and mutton the great Vale can produce, what kind of horses are best suited for working it, or for carrying the followers of hounds over the great grass-lands; above all you may see the owners and breeders of these, some who might pose for the conventional John Bull with small alteration of costume, others with an appearance of having strayed from a race-course, while the bulk of them are dressed as well-dressed men should be,—inconspicuously; and only their healthy complexions mark them as tenant-farmers.

By the time the public are admitted to the show it is in good order. A stray foal may have deserted its mother rashly and be galloping about amidst much neighing; the cattle may be in process of being led to the judging-rings set

apart for them; but the general aspect is that of order, though one suspects that the genial Secretary, who canters about very well mounted, with a word for every one, and a courteous hearing for every complaint, has been through a strenuous time of it in the early morning.

As these are one-day shows, there is no need for the elaborate roofed stalls of the Royal and county shows; the sheep and pigs are penned with hurdles, and the cattle and horses are tied to horizontal boards nailed to posts. At Tring, which is much the biggest show of the three, a canvas roofing is provided for the cows in the milking-tests; a protection hardly proof against the thunderstorms which tradition, often supported by fact, assigns to that otherwise delightful day.

To those of us who are accustomed to an agricultural show being held in some meadow conveniently near to a large town, the beautiful situation of all three shows is a welcome change. At Waddesdon the show takes place just outside the park and at the foot of the great hill on which the mansion stands; at Halton it is held in a field immediately opposite to the grounds of the house, with the great beech-clad Haddington Hill for an eastward horizon; and at Tring the beautifully undulating park makes an ideal setting.

From the mansion at Tring the ground falls away sharply to the south. Here the sheep-dog

trials take place, and to dwellers in southern England the opportunity of seeing the intelligent working of dogs is memorable, from the moment when the sheep are released from a covered van near the distant wood, throughout the time when the shrill whistles of his master instruct the dog how best to guide the sheep between the hurdles, until the anxious moment when the actual penning takes place. The bob-tailed "English sheep-dog" is of no use for this work. Collies that boast no pedigree in the Kennel Club sense make the most sagacious workers.

There is an unmistakable charm about the gathering at these shows, in which every grade in the social scale is represented. The various agricultural and sporting types are strongest, from the dashing young farmer in faultless breeches and gaiters to the weather-beaten shepherd or cowman, or those whose gait denotes them to be followers of the "painful plough."

It is a great occasion, too, for the womenfolk, and they are all there, from the farmer's daughters in cool muslins to the sedate matron examining the contents of the butter and poultry tent with a critical eye. This tent is indeed a relief from the glare outside, with the golden butter resting on white slabs which are placed upon grass grown from seed for that purpose. Even the well-trussed poultry in such surroundings lose that

forlorn appearance they have in shops, and might tempt a vegetarian to backsliding.

The large ring where the jumping and harness classes are judged is surrounded with all kinds of four-wheeled vehicles, from the lordly coach downwards; the spirit of the age introduces motor-cars amongst them, with an incongruous effect to those of us who are old-fashioned. The jumping not only shows the capabilities of the horses, but has that added spice of the dangerous which seems to belong to a spectacular performance; among so many jumps the law of averages must surely demand one or two falls.

Not the least delightful part of the day is the lunch, for which there is always a great scramble, and no allowance made for laggards. The great tent, with its long rows of gaily decorated tables, has the best of carpets,—the bright green turf; and gaiety and content reign amidst the lively popping of corks. The loyal toasts are drunk with enthusiasm and libations are poured upon the altar of Prosperity, on behalf of the Agricultural Association and its President, in a way which would please Triptolemus Yellowley himself.

The smaller farmer will tell you that it does not pay him to exhibit at these shows; the expense of getting his stock into condition, of conveying it to the show, and of having an attendant in charge of it, leave him no profit

even if he be a prize-winner ; the larger breeder may gain more from the advertisement it affords ; but all have an opportunity of seeing picked beasts, and the educational value of such meetings must be as high as its sociable qualities are evident.

Halton Show has a tent for vegetables mostly grown by cottagers ; more ambitious shows might often be glad to have such a display.

Besides the purely agricultural and sporting side of these shows, the visitor has the privilege of seeing the gardens attached to these Rothschild houses ; at Tring there is the wonderful Museum to see ; and at Halton "Mr. Alfred's" band is to be heard.

Altogether no lover of Chilterns or Vale can afford to be unacquainted with these shows, so representative in many ways of the district.

NOTES

A. *William Ellis*. — Like most reformers and teachers, Mr. Ellis was not particular about practising the doctrines he preached. "Many eager farmers, led by his fame and his books, proceeded to visit Ellis's farm, but found to their surprise and disappointment that he did not carry out any of the views which he advocated in print, that his implements were old-fashioned, and that his land was neglected and in bad condition" (*Dictionary of National Biography*).

B. *Hampden*. — Some there are who feel their days lengthened, and so perhaps their hold upon life strengthened, by the ingenious connection of aged lives commonly known as "links with the past." An example of this was given in a lively letter to the *Bucks Herald* of 29th April 1911. A man is mentioned there who, in the sixties of last century, met a shepherd who was then over seventy. The shepherd's grandfather "was born in 1710, and told them there were three brothers out of their family who were in the war; two were killed, and the other helped Mr. Hampden into shepherd Browne's house, that he was dressed very 'purty,' and that they had one of his spurs still in their house." As eighty years separated the shepherd from his grandfather, it seems highly improbable that he received the story from his grandfather's lips, and at an age when the memory of neither could be depended upon; the story is further

weakened by the intervention of another life and the consequent chances of error. *Valeat tanquam.*

C. *Poor Law in 1830.*—There was nothing at all exceptional in the state of things at Cholesbury. For example, a letter to the *Norfolk Chronicle*, written in February 1830, states that “in a large parish in our own neighbourhood we find there is not a single labourer who has not a weekly allowance out of the rates; each receives six shillings a week as wages, and on every Monday night appears before a board, composed of a few of the principal inhabitants, when the difference between what he has received and what they consider adequate for the support of his family is made good to him out of the parish funds. . . . This officious meddling does not secure to the labourer a more liberal compensation for his work, for it has the effect of diminishing his wages in proportion to the amount which he receives from the parish. In the united forms of wages and parochial allowance the agricultural labourer now receives no more than, in the absence of this arrangement, he must have obtained from his employer alone. . . . I know that the practice has removed all checks upon demand of relief, and that it is reducing the whole working population of the country to a dependance on the poor rates.” A reply to this letter, which was signed “A Norfolk Magistrate,” appeared in the same paper from the pen of Sir Thomas B. Beevor. After quoting the Act of the 43rd of Elizabeth as providing for the “lame, impotent, old, blind and others being poor and UNABLE to work,” he goes on to say, with the true ring of his friend Cobbett: “The anomaly of persons ABLE and willing to work, having work, and yet unable to main-

tain themselves, did not then exist, and could hardly be contemplated. The glory of this was reserved to grace the longest and MOST GLORIOUS reign in the annals of English history."

This somewhat lengthy quotation is given as throwing a good deal of light upon an extraordinary state of things, which we find it difficult to realise to-day.

D. *Speen*.—Professor Skeat, in his *Place-Names of Berkshire*, would derive the Berkshire Speen from "spōn," a splinter of wood. This he takes to refer to a shingled house, though it is said to denote a fragment of the "true cross" sometimes, and thence the place where such a relic might be deposited. The wood-shavings which abound in our Buckinghamshire Speen to-day have a more prosaic origin, as by-products of the manufacture of chairs.

E. *Beech-woods*.—In 1794 William James and Jacob Malcolm wrote an official account of the *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Buckingham*. On page 41 they describe the land from Marlow to Fingest, lying between the Oxford road and the Thames, as one-sixth covered with beech-wood, "which may yield a profit of from 14s. to 20s. per acre per annum,"—a loose expression difficult to follow. They go on to say: "These woods require but little attention, as the old trees shed a sufficient quantity of seed to keep the wood constantly full of young plants. This valuable wood is converted to a variety of purposes, one of which is the affording an abundance of fuel to that part of the county where coals are scarce."

Old Fuller says of the beech (*Worthies*, 1662, p. 127): "Our ordinary use thereof (besides making of many Utensils) is for building of Houses. One asked, when Beech would make the best Timber, meaning what season of the year was best to cut it down for that purpose. It was answered that Beech would make the best Timber when no Oak was to be had, a time I assure you which daily approacheth in our Land."

To-day beech is hardly ever used for constructional purposes. A wood so subject to decay by weather and the worm must needs have an indoor use.

In Priest's *Agriculture of Buckinghamshire*, 1810, beech is said to "serve as fuel, and in some cases for repairs and for barn floors; in which instance the joists are of oak" (p. 255). In the same excellent book the "selection system" is thus spoken of: "Lord George Cavendish regularly *draws*, that is thins his woods at Latimers, by certain portions every year, cutting out the large timber, and leaving the young trees to grow up in their stead: this is a practice too much neglected in the woods of Bucks."

F. *The Illustrations*.—As it may not appear that the first, second, and fourth sketches have any immediate relation to the text, it is necessary to say a little about them. They were chosen, after a good deal of thought, as representative of the Chilterns at their best in the case of the two first, and of the Vale in the case of the fourth. The first has for its centre of interest the north-western extremity of Bledlow Ridge, known as Wain Hill; all that lies beyond it is Oxfordshire: the point from which the sketch was made is among the highest parts of the Chilterns, being over

the 800 feet level: it is close to Whiteleaf Cross, and the few scattered cottages along that elevated road bear the pleasant address of "Green Healy," or "Hailey."

The subject of the second sketch is taken from much the same elevation, though at a point six miles north-east of the first position, just outside Halton Wood and not far from the Chiltern Hills Water-works. The view is right over Tring, which lies in the valley, towards Pitstone Hill and Ivinghoe Common, the delightful ridge which makes so grand a close to a walk through Ashridge Park.

The fourth sketch is a south-easterly view from Quainton Hill, a point which rises 610 feet. The church-tower in the middle distance is that of Pitchcott, and the hills about Wendover close the landscape.

The other three sketches are sufficiently explained by the text to which they are attached.

They were all made in May, and the difference of three weeks between numbers one and two is well marked by the advanced state of the trees in the second illustration.

G. According to the Rev. St. John Priest's *General View of the Agriculture of Buckinghamshire* (1810), the Icknield Way is the accidental boundary between two soils which differ in value as much as 10s. an acre to hire "for a furlong in breadth." This was noticed at Halton and at Princes Risborough: "It is not wonderful that the lowest lands should be much richer than lands lying by the side of hills; but it is remarkable that this Roman road should thus separate for a considerable way lands so distinct from each other in quality" (p. 18).

Whilst mentioning Priest's book a singular piece of humour may be quoted from it, all the more remarkable for occurring in a very solid and valuable work but otherwise not more amusing than a Blue Book. He is referring to gardens and orchards, or the lack of them, in Buckinghamshire, and mentions the cherry orchards at Flackwell Heath, between High Wycombe and Wooburn: "Should the season be propitious to the growth of the fruit, the whole neighbourhood vaunts itself, and is as much puffed up as if they were the cause of the abundance; so that if upon the road you meet at the cherry season a person belonging to the place (I do not say of the *first* class of people), and necessity obliges, or curiosity induces you to ask him from whence he comes, he replies immediately, 'From Flackwell Heath. Where do you think?' On the contrary, should some perverse cause have prevented the growth of cherries, or adverse winds and frosts have cut them off, and you should have occasion to put the same question, he replies (but mark his depression), 'From Flackwell Heath—God help us!'"

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